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'The Culture of Narcissism'

Robert Boyers on Christopher Lasch

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TRB

from Washington
February 17, 1979

SALT Shakers

If the SALT II treaty is defeated, as I am inclined to think it will be, the world will be different. The debate has begun and may be savage. President Carter is showing his manliness by boosting defense expenditures. Republican leaders are positioning themselves on the other side, as they did last week in meetings at Easton, Maryland (a kind of GOP mini-convention). The battle has begun, too, among rank-and-file hard-liners, like the 170 retired generals and admirals who wrote a public letter to the president December 11 to beware of SALT.

SALT I was negotiated by Richard Nixon seven years ago. SALT II was initiated by Jerry Ford, and is intended to formulate new nuclear restraints. SALT III someday (it is hoped) will put actual reductions into effect.

President Carter made a jolting comment in his State of the Union address last month. It was intended to show he is no softy even if he wants an agreement with Russia.

"SALT II is not based on sentiment.... SALT II does not rely on trust.... The American nuclear deterrent will remain strong after SALT II. For example, just one of our relatively invulnerable Poseidon submarines—comprising less than 2 percent of our total nuclear force of submarines, aircraft and land-based missiles—carries enough warheads to destroy every large and medium-sized city in the Soviet Union! Our deterrent is overwhelming—and I will sign no agreement unless our deterrent force will remain overwhelming." (Applause.)

That sounds like real he-man stuff, doesn't it! That should placate the die-hards, you would think. It doesn't. If Nixon could start SALT I, if Jerry Ford could meet Brezhnev in Vladivostock in 1974 to push for a SALT II—then you would suppose Carter could be trusted (with the Pentagon looking over his shoulder) to work out a safe agreement. But such a presumption doesn't take into account the Decline-and-Fall school, and the deeper feeling that any arms agreement that the Soviets would sign must be a bad agreement.

As columnist George F. Will gloomily says in *Newsweek*, it is useful "to look back along the downward crumbling path" as "America's decline accelerates." He cites the principal American hand-wringer, Eugene V. Rostow, one-time under secretary of state and now executive director of the Committee on the Present Danger and teacher at Yale. A sample of Rostow's thought is excerpted in *The Washington Star* under the stark headline (which apparently is not intended to be ironic) "Slipping Toward Impotence Across the Globe." In a nuclear exchange, Rostow says, "we would risk 100 million casualties" and the Soviets "10 million." Why the disparity, I don't know. Rostow evidently has information Carter lacks (despite his Poseidon submarines). Rostow categorically states, "the Soviets view SALT II as major instrument for lulling American anxieties until it is too late to do anything to reduce them."

It is all Carter's fault . . . he is not to be trusted . . . the list of his failures before the Russian threat is almost endless—from deferral of the neutron bomb to refusal "to cooperate in the restoration of a stable monetary system." Rostow's classes at Yale must be lively affairs. Everything is black and white. SALT II, he says, is "an expression of American acquiescence in the Soviet drive for overwhelming military superiority."

I don't mean to exaggerate. I am trying to show the kind of battle that is just beginning. "The US has consistently given in to the Soviets on virtually every major issue," says a release issued by the right wing Heritage Foundation. The American Conservative Union has a half-hour doomsday film for which it is buying time around the country. Oblivion is only 30 minutes away, it says.

The struggle is already becoming politicized. If the desperately outnumbered Republicans can just grab a retooled version of the old Nixon-McCarthy Communist issue they might make a comeback. Here's what Nixon said on October 18, 1952, in Utica, New York: "I charge that the buried record will show that Mr. Truman and his associates, either through stupidity or political expedience, were primarily responsible for the unimpeded growth of the Communist conspiracy within the United States. I further charge that Mr. Truman, Dean Acheson, and other administration officials for political reasons covered up this Communist conspiracy and attempted to halt its exposure."

For some reason, Harry Truman never could like Nixon. The tone of the above, of course, has not been duplicated today and may not be, but who knows? The issue today is greater.

Here's the lead Adam Clymer puts on his *New York Times* story from Easton, Maryland, February 4: "Republican leaders decided today that the Republican Party should abandon its traditional bipartisanship in foreign policy and make overall Soviet conduct a key issue in negotiating and considering a new strategic arms treaty (SALT)."

Ostensibly, all that says, of course, is that the new SALT II treaty requires the most minute and careful examination (which it certainly does). But the 95 Republican officeholders, including 26 senators, who attended the meeting did accuse Jimmy Carter of letting US military power decline and of ignoring "Soviet aggressiveness."

After World War II, Michigan's Republican senator, Arthur Vandenberg, supported bipartisanship in foreign affairs. GOP senate leader Howard Baker, however, explained at Easton: "Vandenberg was right in his time, but I think we're right in our time." It is dramatic to watch Baker. He is a man of principle. He has presidential ambitions. He broke ranks and helped Jimmy Carter achieve the Panama Canal treaties, the repeal of the arms embargo against Turkey and so on. Editorials praised him. But this is a tougher issue. The GOP convention probably wouldn't nominate anyone who voted for SALT. Baker must follow his conscience.

Democrat Frank Church of Idaho, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, which gets SALT first, told reporters last week that the treaty will be examined microscopically. It worried him that Republicans at Easton agreed to link their vote with the Russians' behavior elsewhere. The linkage theory is that approving SALT is doing Russia a favor. It they're ornery—no treaty. By the same reasoning you would get even with your adversary by shooting yourself in the foot! SALT I was signed by the Russians, Church recalled, just when the United States was bombing Haiphong harbor filled with Soviet ships. No linkage there.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

February 17, 1979

The Great Savings Swindle

From the first day the Pilgrims set foot on American soil, thrift has been one of the most hallowed of American virtues. These religious dissidents regarded it as a vital part of the self-restraint which characterized their lives; later sociologists, notably Max Weber, saw it as crucial to the development of a capitalist economy. Like many treasured ideals, this one nowadays is honored more in the breach than in the practice. Americans save less than seven percent of their disposable income, which by the standards of other western nations makes them extravagant spendthrifts. Japanese citizens save nearly a fourth of their disposable income; West Germans, a sixth. Even the British save more than we do, despite the debilitating economic woes that have plagued them in recent years. And the rate of saving here has been falling steadily for 13 years. In 1978, private saving in the United States sank to the lowest level in 30 years.

These trends hold ominous implications for the American economy. When people save less, banks and other lending institutions have less money available for private investment, which inhibits the capital formation needed to increase productivity. Lagging productivity, in turn, aggravates inflation by preventing the supply of goods and services from keeping up with the growing money supply. The whole process also handicaps American industry in competing with foreign producers, thus contributing to our balance-of-trade deficit, and the dollar's decline.

Why are Americans saving less these days? Simple: the government encourages them to do so. The government has defrauded and abused the American saver in a variety of ways, and as a rule, the smaller the saver, the worse his treatment. Anyone who puts away a few dollars every month in a savings account or in savings bonds has reason to think everyone in Washington is out to cheat him.

The federal government has conducted its campaign against the thrifty, wittingly or unwittingly, using three basic weapons. The first, which underlies the other two, is inflation—erratic, unpredictable and severe. The effect of any sustained and continuing devaluation of currency is to encourage people to spend their money quickly, before it depreciates, and to penalize those who hold on to it.

Some economists place the blame for inflation squarely on the government. Some regard it as merely the victim of excessive appetites in the private sector. Either way, the government has used inflation as a blunt instrument to beat small savers over the head. Two government policies are especially insidious. The first is an obscure law called Regulation Q, which imposes a strict ceiling on the rate of interest paid on savings accounts. Currently savings and loans and other thrift institutions are permitted to pay only 5.25 percent interests on time deposits; commercial banks may pay only 5 percent. This regulation was enacted in 1933 in an effort to dampen competition among banks, which some observers regarded as a constant threat to their survival. The limit was extended to savings and loans and other thrift institutions in 1966. Thrift institutions naturally have always supported Regulation Q, since it gives them an advantage over their commercial rivals. The regulation also prohibits banks from paying interest on checking accounts, though some banks have begun to circumvent this rule through electronic-transfer accounts.

The federal limit on interest paid on savings accounts guarantees that small depositors will suffer during periods of high inflation. Consider a saver who deposited $500 in a commercial passbook savings account in 1967. At the maximum rate (4 percent in 1967, raised to 4½ percent in 1971 and to 5 percent in 1973), compounded daily, by 1978 he would have accumulated only $368.94 in interest, giving him a total of $868.94. But during this period, the cost of living doubled, meaning that his money would be worth only $434.47 in 1967 dollars. The saver's reward for his patience and self-restraint: a 13-percent erosion in the purchasing power of his money.

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The government's other weapon against the small saver is the redoubtable savings bond. Here is an example of the federal government ingeniously manipulating private markets for its own profit. The interest paid on US savings bonds is only six percent, well below both the rates prevailing in money markets and the rate of inflation. But the government can get by with this paltry rate because it closes off the principal alternative available to small savers—savings deposits. By holding down the interest on savings, the government prevents private institutions from luring away small deposits with higher interest payments.

The government sells savings bonds with touching appeals to patriotism and good citizenship. "Take stock in America" goes the current slogan. Last year some 10 million Americans bought bonds through the payroll savings plan, an ingenious device which allows employees to have money deducted automatically from their paychecks to purchase savings bonds. Total savings bonds holdings now stand at $80 billion.

The savings bond program is a monumental swindle. Right now the five-year Series E bonds pay only six percent when held to maturity; H bonds, which pay out interest at regular intervals instead of all at once at the end of a designated period, pay 4.2 percent at the outset, gradually increasing to six percent if held to maturity. What this means is that in a year of nine percent inflation, like last year, the savings bond investor will get a negative three percent return. Because of the slightly higher rate of interest and (for E bonds) the deferral of taxes until the bond is cashed in, savings bonds offer a marginally better deal than savings deposits, but not much. Surely it is unappetizing to see the government deliberately deceiving its own citizens in this manner. Particularly deceitful is the government's habit, not only of advertising savings bonds as a solid investment, but of suggesting that such investments are crucial to the nation's well-being. They are not. Banks, pension funds, and other sources provide sufficient money to cover federal deficits. But it is cheaper for the government to finance part of the debt by gulling patriotic citizens into buying savings bonds.

In December the Treasury Department dramatized the fundamental inequity in the government's policies by offering special six-month certificates of deposit paying market interest rates—which currently run about 10 percent, substantially higher than the rate on ordinary savings deposits or savings bonds. But the minimum investment is $10,000, meaning that well-to-do investors can take advantage of the higher rate, but small savers can't. The new certificates provoked the Gray Panthers, an organization of elderly people, to file a petition with the Federal Reserve asking either that Regulation Q be lifted or that smaller-denomination certificates (say, $500) be sold to accommodate savers who don't have $10,000 to invest. Robert Gnazida, an attorney for the group, says only half-facetiously, "Failing that, we asked that savings institutions be required to post signs stating 'Saving may be hazardous to your wealth.'"

The Gray Panthers are right, of course. Congress should repeal Regulation Q—if not at once, then in stages. The federal government shouldn't impoverish people with small savings accounts in order to protect banks and thrift institutions from having to compete for customers like other private firms. Neither should it prey on the patriotic instincts of its citizens for its own profit, as it has in the savings bond program. The savings bond program should be abolished; failing that, bonds should pay investors the market rate of interest. Measures like this would help the economy by encouraging Americans to save more. But more important, they would provide overdue protection to some Americans who have been badly treated by their government.

Cambodia and its prince endure uncertain futures.

Sihanouk the Steady

New York

This week the president reaffirmed the US commitment to Thailand's security after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Thailand's eastern borders will be "inviolate," he said. This statement comes 10 years after another president concluded that Cambodia's eastern borders should be violated to bomb North Vietnamese troops and to save American lives. Today Cambodia is in Vietnamese hands.

One of the victims of the 1969 decision was Prince Norodom Sihanouk who last week was in his suite in the United Nations Plaza Hotel, still determined, despite the odds, that Cambodia will once again become an independent nation, its borders guaranteed by international agreement, with a role of leadership for himself and a secure and good life for the remaining Cambodian people. Over the past nine years, Cambodia has had four governments—the deposed Sihanouk, the defeated Lon Nol, the bloody Pol Pot, and now the Vietnamese, Cambodia's traditional enemy.

Sihanouk was dressed dapperly in a brownish gray pinstripe, his hair iron grey. He had regained weight; his handshake was firm and his face as expressive as ever. He is an inch or two taller than Teng Hsiao-ping. He was somber as he contemplated the alternatives he has in regard to Cambodia. When he arrived at the United Nations in January for his defense of the legal

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Correspondence

Enlightenment in a dark decade

To the editors:

I hope that future scholars of the women's civil rights movement, who look back on the dark decade of the 1970s, will see *The New Republic* for what it is: the only national political publication that recognizes the women's movement as a major moral, social and political issue.

You stand alone in devoting ample space to thoughtful and eclectic commentary on the many complex ideas and events that comprise the women's movement. More importantly, your writers have gone beyond a narrow definition of the movement to write on "general" economic, social, and political themes as these affect the whole of our society, including women. You have thereby demonstrated in the soundest way that "women's" concerns belong in the mainstream of political and social thought and cannot be understood otherwise.

Thank you for consistently promoting balanced and intelligent dissent.

JoAnne Brown
Bethany, Connecticut

Tonic for the liberal malaise

To the editors:

Glenn Tinder's comfortable recommendation of the tragic political consciousness as a possible answer to the current liberal malaise is the perfect tonic for our bothered social conscience ("Liberals and Revolution," *TNR*, January 27). We are guilty, weak, confused, tired of expecting solutions,and are finally happy waiting for the end of imperial America. Our only hope is that as we ponder the "more mysterious historical meanings" of our demise that the barbarians that assault our shores will spare our hypocritical selves. In return we shall gladly hand over our decadent possessions and join the rest of mankind.

No thank you. I for one prefer a historical consciousness rooted in an understanding of the transcendence of all civilizations, and the importance of maintaining, especially in the most difficult times, a creative response to challenge. America as a product of western civilization has inherited a tradition of dynamism and arrogance and shares with the rest of the industrialized world the problems of pollution, resource depletion, and social tension. As we shed our arrogant, self-righteous postures let us develop an attitude toward the rest of mankind that strives to bring "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" for all. In this Promethean struggle for solutions, we can find happiness.

Jerry S. Biernacki
Lowell, Michigan

To the editors:

As Glenn Tinder discussed the liberal rejection of revolution (*TNR*, January 27), I waited for the inevitable invocation of Reinhold Niebuhr. I was not disappointed but astonished to learn that Niebuhr has passed into obscurity and was "at best vaguely familiar to the literate public." Tinder's piece, so reminiscent of the instant despair made fashionable by the "End of Ideologists" of the 1950s, has become the canned background muzak of liberalism in retreat. Whenever the going gets tough liberal optimism becomes the target as "mature" intellectuals rush to resurrect original sin. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., while mapping the route of *The Vital Center* in 1949, discovered with some enthusiasm "a new dimension of anxiety, guilt and corruption" along the way. He credited Niebuhr and gratefully dedicated the first volume of his *Age of Roosevelt* to him. During the Cold War, when foreign policy "realists" were assaulting Wilsonian moralism in the name of *Realpolitik*, George Kennan announced that Reinhold Niebuhr was "the father of us all." Not very long ago, the Harvard historian and vigilant opponent of the "excesses of democracy," David Donald, proclaimed that the past had nothing to teach the present and counseled his students to turn to Niebuhr's text: "Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in a lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope." In the same issue of *TNR* as Tinder's article, Samuel Beer reminds us that even Jimmy Carter is given to quoting Niebuhr. Usually, I might add, when the president is called upon to justify inaction in the face of injustice. So much for the alleged obscurity of Reinhold Niebuhr. This ritualistic resort to Niebuhr is usually unfair. The theologian was concerned with the development of a nerve of failure not with encouraging a failure of nerve.

Michael Wreszin
Queens College
Flushing, New York

Right to bear arms

To the editors:

TRB's scenario for the "Thursday War" (*TNR*, December 20) suggests yet another excellent reason for the widespread possession of weapons by citizens.

It is estimated that 100 million Americans would be killed outright, but the question remains about the possibly 50 million Americans who would be seriously injured in the initial attack and the resulting radiation. It would take months for our medical, communications and transportation systems to begin to function, on even a rudimentary level, and there will be almost no way to ease the suffering of these individuals, and a high percentage of them will probably face a painful, and lingering, death due to the lack of adequate treatment.

The possibility of fighting off enemy paratroopers and/or gangs of marauders has often been cited as an argument for a well-armed citizenry, but the need to alleviate the hopeless suffering of family and friends seems, in itself, a persuasive reason for every home to have a weapon.

Paul Sanzenbach
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Fire and ice

To the editors:

This is in regard to Richard Gilman's review of Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Fire* (*TNR*, January 20). As I recall, Cleaver's earlier *Soul on Ice* presented an argument for "attempting a maneuver of my own" which justified rape. *Soul on Fire* contains, according to Gilman, an "entirely uninteresting" justification of prayer. Whatever the literary merits of the two works, Cleaver's most recent "maneuver" hardly seems one to be regretted on political or moral grounds.

I suspect that from too many points of view, prayer will continue to provide fewer literary possibilities than rape. But I would agree with the sentiment of Gilman's words—"It is all very sad."

William E. Johnston Jr.
Claremont, California

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Pol Pot regime before the Security Council, he said he would retire in France. Now Teng has persuaded him to return to Peking. This was a hard choice. "I cannot cooperate with the internal policies of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. They have assured the Chinese that they will reform, modify their cruel policies, but that is expecting the tiger to become a small cat . . . a pussy cat. Yes, a pussy cat."

In Tokyo, Teng repeated China's intention to impose "sanctions" on Vietnam because of the Cambodian invasion. What combination of Chinese hopes and pressures, one wonders, might have convinced Sihanouk to abandon his retirement plans? "What can I do? I must support the fighting, the resistance, or I would be a traitor. I have agreed with the Chinese to return to Peking. They continue to support Pol Pot as the legitimate government of Cambodia, just as they supported me during 1970-1975."

This is an act of considerable personal political courage. During those years in Peking, while he was well treated by Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai, Ieng Sary, the deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs in Pol Pot's government, was insufferable. Sihanouk detests Ieng, who is again in Peking, "eating Peking duck." Under the Chinese Gang of Four and under Pol Pot, Sihanouk was stripped of his title of chief of state in 1976, and until the Vietnamese invasion, was held under house arrest. Now his safety is guaranteed by Teng only.

If returning to Peking makes Sihanouk ambivalent, the Vietnamese offer is clear-cut and not difficult to refuse. Through unidentified third countries, Sihanouk was offered a role in the Vietnamese-created Heng Samrin regime. "I will not become a Vietnamese puppet," he says. A Chinese puppet? Better perhaps, but he has declined their offer to participate in the government of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. His hatred is deep. When he was under house arrest, his request to see his children for only a few minutes a year was refused. Two sons, two daughters, two sons-in-law, 10 grandchildren—he presumes them all dead. When he speaks of Pol Pot, his voice rises, his arms wave, and his eyes flash under raised eyebrows.

But it is his people, their fate and their future, that concern him most. He quotes one of the phrases describing the character of Jayavarma VII, the Leper King, the builder of Angkor Thom, one of the grandest temples of the Angkor complex. "He suffered more from his subjects' diseases than from his own. For it is the people's pain that makes the pain of kings and not their own." All in all, he thought that it was not a mistake to stay in Phnom Penh after the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975. The few occasions when he was able to go out among the people raised their spirits, he believes, in their time of trouble and they realized he was there, not out of sympathy to the regime, but in his role as "papa" of his people.

Sihanouk does not see any happy short-term solution to the question of Cambodian integrity and independence. There is, he points out, a contradiction between Pol Pot's resistance movement and his need to rely on the support of the Cambodian population at large. Some will support Pol Pot. "His soldiers are the elite of 'Democratic Kampuchea,' which was supposed to be a classless society but in fact was formed on the basis of military elitism. The Heng Samrin regime has temporarily granted to the people some of the things they want—freedom of religion, movement, even the right not to work. How long this will last in a communist state is open to question. And besides, Heng Samrin is a Vietnamese puppet and the people will never accept Vietnamese rule." The effectiveness of the resistance may therefore increase. Son Sen, defense minister under Pol Pot, had prepared guerrilla bases in the mountains along the western border. The Chinese are sending in supplies by sea and through Thailand, he said.

And what of the future? If there is a kind of bloody stalemate, a situation where Pol Pot becomes weary and the Vietnamese don't want to pay the occupation price, then there is the possibility that a new political situation may evolve wherein Sihanouk might again be able to play a role. He is 56 and in robust health. He would support an independent, neutral government with a multi-party system to guarantee the security and liberty of the people.

Judging from the past, Sihanouk's dedication to western-style democracy is suspect; but the last eight years have been bitter ones, and any development that allowed Cambodia to again become an independent political and geographical entity would receive his enthusiastic support. He is concerned with the problem of Soviet "hegemony" in Southeast Asia, which he considers a serious and continuing threat to the countries in the area, the ASEAN block (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines). The United States, he says, has a moral responsibility to maintain the independence of those countries. He added wistfully, "and Cambodia too."

Robert J. Myers

White House Watch

Obfuscations

This piece notes and evaluates some of the recent news reports to the effect, implied but never stated, that President Carter is a liar and a crook. The same reports imply, but stay even farther away from stating, that his

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principal partners in the Carter family farm and peanut businesses—the President's mother, Miz Lillian, and his younger brother, Billy—are liars and crooks. The reports mainly have to do with whether Carter personal and business loans and funds were illegally diverted to financing his primary and general election campaigns for the presidency and whether he falsified a claim for investment credit against income taxes in 1975 and 1976. In order to credit these reports you have to believe that Jimmy Carter in and after 1974, his last year as governor of Georgia and the year when he decided to go for the presidency of the United States, authorized or condoned actions connected with his personal, family, business and campaign finances that, if proven in courts, would make him, his mother, his brother and many campaign associates liable to federal fines and imprisonment.

I don't believe that Jimmy Carter is a liar, a crook, or the fool that he would have to be if the reports in question were anywhere near correct. Not one of the reports has been substantiated in any way that reflects upon Carter's character. Some of the facts, notably his appointment and his continuing expression of confidence in Bert Lance, his first budget director, reflect upon his judgment. The reports discussed here reflect much more seriously upon the media and upon the tradition that federal investigative agencies—in this matter, the Department of Justice, the FBI, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Federal Elections Commission—do not comment upon investigations in progress or even say whether they are in progress. The reticence is intended to protect wrongly accused individuals and often does. In the Carter cases, it serves to promote the suspicion that something must be wrong when nothing wrong has been proven or, in some instances, responsibly alleged.

Finally, in this context, I offer a thought that is pointless in the sense that it is sure to be ignored or, if noticed, declared to be impractical and unconstitutional. The thought is that the media, print and electronic, should report investigations of serious official wrongdoing only after they have been completed and the findings have been announced. The media may track the investigations in the closest detail and may be equipped by their acquired information to approve or denounce the findings. But wait a little while! In today's post-Watergate climate, a report that the Department of Justice has requested and obtained Carter peanut business records going back to 1974 amounts to saying to many people that something must be wrong and that

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somebody should be indicted. Department officials' refusal, traditionally right, to say whether such action is contemplated or intended encourages an impression that could turn out to be damaging and false. I don't know what to do about this problem, except to suggest that it is a problem which ought to be more widely recognized and chewed over by journalists than it is.

Attorney General Griffin Bell, one of Carter's leading Georgians, reported to the US Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on February 1 that there was no basis for appointing a special federal prosecutor to pursue an allegation that Carter, Joel McCleary, a White House assistant dealing with politics and politicians, and Vice President Walter Mondale might have illegally solicited contributions to pay off a Democratic party deficit of around $1.5 million, dating from the Hubert Humphrey and Robert Kennedy campaigns for the Democratic nomination in 1968, at a luncheon in the President's family dining room in the White House mansion last August 10. The details of the allegation and the conclusion are recited here only to illustrate the post-Watergate insanity that grips or involves all of us.

Last fall Congress enacted, and Carter signed, a law requiring the Attorney General to report to a special committee of the court whether *any* allegation of misconduct by *any* senior federal official, including the President, justifies appointment of a special prosecutor. If most of the majority or minority members of either the Senate or House judiciary committees disagreed with the attorney general's conclusion that a special prosecutor was or was not required, they could require him to justify his conclusion. It is among the silliest federal laws ever enacted and signed. The first consequences were as follows.

In its November 13 issue, *New York* magazine published a story by Jeff Gerth, a *New York Times* reporter who was then on strike and, like many of his colleagues, was scrabbling for dough wherever he could honestly earn it. His piece was a fuzzy and inconclusive report to the effect, quite accurate, that Carter on August 10 had been the host at an unannounced luncheon in the White House mansion for past contributors to the Democratic party. The question implied by the report was whether Carter, Mondale and Joel McLeary might have violated a law forbidding the solicitation of party contributions on federal property or in federal offices. "There doesn't appear," Gerth wrote, "to have been any such solicitations by a government official at the luncheon session," a statement that should have caused any responsible editor to dump the piece. The law was enacted in 1883. On its face it applied principally to members of Congress, and there have been only four recorded prosecutions under it.

Anyhow, and I'm cutting here through a horribly boring record, Bell said in his report to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals that "on November 3, 1978, the Federal Bureau of Investigation received an allegation from an informant that on August 10, 1978, the President and Vice President had attended a luncheon in the White House" at which "according to the source, solicitation or receipt of funds might have occurred at the luncheon in violation of 18 USC 603." Eighteen USC is the 1883 law. The "informant" and "source" mentioned by Bell was Gerth. The belief at the Department of Justice is that Gerth knew that the October law does not require the department to act on published news accounts but does require it to act upon specific allegations. Gerth told me on February 7 that he did not intend to instigate anything in a telephone conversation with an FBI agent on November 3, the date cited by Bell. Gerth said he merely quoted to the agent the article he'd written for *New York* magazine after the agent asked him what he was doing during the *Times* strike. Bell found, as Gerth had reported, that two of the guests at the August 10 lunch, Lew Wasserman and Richard O'Neill, had on that afternoon reported contributions respectively of $100,000 and $25,000 to the DNC. Bell said there was no evidence that the contributions had been solicited at the lunch, by Carter or anyone else, and that the complaint was "without merit." He said and the court did not question that there was no reason to appoint a special prosecutor.

What I've regarded since pre-election 1976 as the most serious suspicion of Carter has been that he falsified his claim for an investment tax credit of about $1 million against his calendar 1975 and 1976 income taxes. The claim greatly reduced his federal income tax for 1975, payable in 1976, and absolved him of any federal income tax for 1976, payable in 1977. If he or anybody acting for him had falsified that claim, he ought to be in the Atlanta federal penitentiary rather than in the White House. Two of his Georgia friends and lawyers, White House Counsel Robert Lipshutz in Washington and Charles Kirbo in Atlanta, have shown reporters tabulations put together by Robert Perry, the President's accountant in Americus, Georgia. The tabulations indicate that the Carter peanut processing and marketing business actually spent anywhere from $145,000 to $186,000, depending on how the figures are read, more than was claimed for tax credit purposes on improvements to the peanut plant in Plains.

Coming:
Henry Fairlie on
Britain's Woes.

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The other really serious allegation, far more serious than all the stories about brother Billy Carter's antics and borrowings, is that funds from loans to the Carter peanut business were illegally diverted to financing Carter's primary and general election campaigns. I am told at the White House that the Federal Election Commission, certainly not an agency dedicated to the interests of Jimmy Carter, has expended "thousands of man hours" on staff investigation of the financing of Carter's 1974-1976 campaigns. *Newsweek*, whose reporters have researched FEC and other relevant records (as I have not), reported in its February 12 issue that the commission had found "no major irregularities" in his primary campaign financing. A special directors' committee of Bert Lance's former bank, the National Bank of Georgia, reported to the SEC that it found no evidence of improper diversion of bank loans to the Carter campaigns. The bank committee reported indications that at Lance's direction the interest rates on loans to Carter businesses had been reduced on three occasions. Typically, considering the disgraceful coverage of this whole affair, the bank committee was said in some news reports to have found that Lance gave his friend Carter improper and "preferential" treatment. The committee said no such thing. Speaking as the son of a Mississippi banker in what at the time was known to be the poorest county in the poorest state of the union, I can say on the basis of knowledge gained before Bert Lance and Jimmy Carter were born that bankers do favor customers whom they know and trust. I doubt that it's a custom peculiar to the South.

All was not grim and foreboding in the Carter camp. Lipshutz, Press Secretary Jody Powell, and imagist Gerald Rafshoon just knew that their Jimmy had not and could not have done or condoned anything really wrong and therefore professed—truly, I judged—to be unworried. Griffin Bell and Carter seemed to share the sense of comfort. The Alfalfa Club, a society of Washington influentials, annually nominates and entertains a candidate for President of the United States. Its 1979 nominee was Bell. In his acceptance speech January 27 he quoted Winston Churchill's famous pledge to fight Nazi invaders of Britain on the beaches, on the landing fields and on the streets, with beer bottles if necessary, and set forth the Alfalfa party's platform: "Our motto will be to wage obfuscation. We will wage obfuscation on the beaches and on the landing fields and in the political arena of America. And when all else fails and we can no longer obfuscate, we will tell the truth to the extent that we know it." Bell showed Carter a copy of the speech. Carter wrote on the back of a page of it in his spidery longhand:

"Griffin: I deeply resent this speech. You have stolen our basic policy theme. Obfuscation has been advanced to new heights in my administration. You could at least give me credit for this. Jimmy C."

John Osborne

On the Hill.

Cult-mongering

When Senator Robert Dole got the idea to hold a hearing on the dangers presented to the country by the growth of religious "cults," he no doubt figured it might be just the thing to get his incipient presidential campaign off the ground. Dole initially said he would run only if Ronald Reagan didn't, but now he plans to run no matter what. But he has been largely ignored by the nation's press, which has fixed attention heavily on Reagan and his two rivals from Texas, George Bush and John Connally. Other announced or likely candidates—Howard Baker, Philip Crane, John Anderson, and of course Dole—have sought ways to catch the press's eye. Baker has succeeded by seizing on SALT, but Dole so far has not been able to do so. Republican regulars generally don't take his chances seriously and many blame him (fairly or unfairly) for Gerald Ford's narrow defeat in 1976. As Ford's running mate, Dole's most memorable contribution was an ill-considered reference to the two world wars and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam as "Democrat wars."

While Dole was trying to figure out how to get his name in front of the public, the Reverend Jim Jones was preparing the members of his People's Temple for a ritual mass suicide-murder, an event consummated on November 18. In the aftermath of the Guyana holocaust, some 50 different members of Congress (by one count) asked the State and Justice Departments for advice on how such religious groups might be combatted. The Guyana episode heightened public interest in the various sects that have appeared in the United States in recent years—including such diverse groups as the Hare Krishna, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, and the Church of Scientology. Such groups are disliked by many Americans, and the deaths in Jonestown further soured public sentiment against unfamiliar religious organizations—all of which are commonly known by the pejorative designation "cults."

So when he arranged to look into these sects, Dole saw himself riding a wave of public opinion. Congressional hearings frequently have served ambitious politicians as vehicles to national prominence. Richard Nixon first gained fame in the Senate investigation of Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers. Joseph McCarthy became a household word thanks to television coverage of his hearings on government loyalty risks. More recently (and less successfully) Senator Henry Jackson used committee hearings to browbeat oil company executives about gasoline prices, trying to rally the electorate behind his hopeless 1972 presidential bid. Frank Church used his Senate Intelligence Committee hearings on the CIA to drum up support for his 1976 presidential race, but had no more luck than Jackson.

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Dole might have taken note of these flops before deciding to hold this hearing. Having no committee of his own, Dole had to organize an ad hoc group of House and Senate members—several of whom, he said, backed out at the last minute. Having no formal authority, the committee lacked even the traditional pretense of helping Congress to formulate legislation. Conscious of the unusual nature of the proceeding, Dole made a point of denying that it was what it appeared to be. "I want to make it very clear that this proceeding is not a Congressional hearing; it is not an investigation," he said, in his opening statement. He described it merely as a "meeting" intended to provide a "starting point for members in their search for a thorough understanding of this sensitive and complex issue."

By that time, though, Dole realized that nothing was going as planned. He had meant the hearing to provide a forum for several witnesses bent on vilifying the "cults," notably self-styled "deprogrammer" Ted Patrick. Patrick hires out to parents who want their cultist children abducted and restored to "normal." The committee first invited only witnesses hostile to these sects. About a week before the hearing was scheduled, though, the word got out to various church and civil liberties groups, which had not been officially informed or invited. The committee apparently thought public sentiment so overwhelmingly opposed to the "cults" that the mainline churches would raise no objection. The committee was mistaken. No fewer than nine churchmen, representing the nation's biggest Protestant denominations and the Synagogue Council of America, fired off a letter to Dole complaining that the hearing would "inflame the public and obscure the delicate and complex issues which surround the activities of minority (religious) groups." The American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State insisted on appearing. Faced with criticism from these groups, the committee agreed to let them send witnesses. But it invited no representatives from the religious groups being investigated.

As if all this weren't disruptive enough of his plans, Dole arrived at the Russell Senate Office Building the morning of the hearing to find several hundred members of the Unification Church picketing outside with placards aimed at him. "Repeal the First Amendment! Dole for President!" read one. The hearing room was packed with "Moonies," mostly young white men, clean-cut and conservatively dressed, looking as if they had been stamped out by a cookie cutter. The Moonies unanimously applauded or jeered at appropriate points in the testimony, seemingly on prearranged cue. Dole calmly ignored most of the interruptions, including a few from individual Moonies who stood up to shout "Lies!" or "Garbage!" He only occasionally pounded his gavel politely to restore order, no doubt aware of the flattering contrast he offered to the boorish conduct of the Moonies.

Dole's hearing was considerably less than the "witch hunt" alleged by the Moonies, but its original purpose clearly was to discredit "cults" in general. Dole's own witnesses, a singularly unappetizing group, betrayed his intent. Some of them accused the Unification Church and other sects of defrauding donors, beating defectors, and threatening outside critics. Others, like Patrick, said these sects practice insidious forms of "mind control" and "brainwashing." Rabbi Maurice Davis, who claims responsibility for "separating 128 young people from cults" over the last five years, drew a parallel between the Unification Church and Jim Jones's organization. "The path of segregation leads to lynching—every time," he declared. "The path of anti-Semitism leads to Auschwitz—every time. The path of the cults leads to Jonestown—and we watch it at our peril." Patrick's views are elaborated in an interview in the March issue of *Playboy*. An example of his sophistication is his explanation of Krishna soliciting: "They come up to you, stand inches away and talk to you or they touch you on the shoulder. Then they stare you straight in the eye. If they can make eye contact and get the person's trust, then they can put him in a brief hypnotic trance and get $20 from him, just like that." And his defense of the First Amendment: "I believe a person should have the right to worship the way he pleases, but when someone [i.e., a "cult"] destroys your free will and your ability to think and takes your mind, you don't have any more rights." Patrick also suggested that the government "arrest every cult leader."

After three hours of listening to such accusations, many of them patent nonsense, the Moonies were in a surly mood and the committee, fearful of giving further credence to the charge that it was recklessly smearing people, grudgingly granted five minutes to Neal Salonen, the pudgy president of the eastern US branch of the Unification Church. It was no credit to the committee that it left Salonen to say what it should have said of "cults" to begin with: "This very meeting violates the spirit of the First Amendment. . . . If we've done something wrong, let us be charged, let us defend ourselves, let us be judged, and we'll accept the consequences." The relevant point is that the criminal acts the Moonies are accused of can be readily handled through the criminal justice system. Those accusations that rely on denying the individual's right to submit himself to the discipline of a religious sect, however offensive or bizarre, deserve no action at all, even a congressional investigation. By the time Salonen finished, it was obvious that Dole's plan had backfired. Instead of twisted zealots, the Moonies looked like martyrs; instead of the defender of America's young, Dole came off an un-Grand Inquisitor.

By itself, the Dole hearing was no witch-hunt, but it did suggest a readiness on the part of some politicians to abridge the First Amendment, if necessary, to "protect" people from the right and responsibility of thinking for

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themselves and accepting the consequences. As part of a national reaction against the exercise of religious freedom by widely-despised sects, the hearing was disturbing. The reaction is plain: Ted Patrick has been acquitted of kidnapping by courts which excused his coercive methods as less evil than allowing a sect member to remain one. Numerous communities have passed laws prohibiting or restricting soliciting by religious organizations. The ACLU worries, perhaps with good reason, that deprogramming might be exempted from the kidnapping statutes in the proposed new US criminal code. Dole's hearing was a reminder of how fragile and precarious the First Amendment's protections are. It was also a reminder that anyone who doesn't believe the First Amendment protects the liberties of Moonies doesn't believe in the First Amendment.

Stephen Chapman

The Republicans are alive and scrambling toward 1980.

Glad Old Party

Easton, Maryland

The final wording of the Republicans' Tidewater II resolution on SALT was worked out at the William Howard Taft table by two necktieless fellows whose name tags identified them as Howard and Orrin. From there, a diminutive onlooker name-tagged John carried the draft over to the Eisenhower table so that Malcolm and the others could give it the once over. The resolution proclaimed that in negotiating and ratifying SALT, "the total military and foreign policy relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union" ought to be taken into account. Malcolm approved, but suggested they add a "whereas" clause about how the foreign policy failures of the Carter administration were "self evident." Solid Republican rhetoric. "Good!" exclaimed John, "Put it in!"

The fine print on the name tags of Howard and Orrin more fully revealed these gentlemen to be US senators Baker of Tennessee and Hatch of Utah. Little John was Tower from Texas, and Malcolm is Wallop, the rancher-senator who owns a section of Wyoming about the size of Connecticut. They were among about a hundred elected Republican politicians gathered at the Tidewater Inn here, including 26 senators, a handful of governors, members of Congress and various statewide officials from around the country.

These weekends of first-named, open-collard Republican informality are the creation of Oregon Senator Robert Packwood. For two days, the politicians and their wives, along with a bevy of reporters, repair to a country inn on the backwaters of Maryland's eastern shore to dine on blue crab imperial and Chesapeake Bay oysters. Beer taps are open 24 hours a day and each evening winds down with the conviviality of group singing around the piano. Conference business is organized around a discussion of resolutions—SALT, sunset legislation and a constitutional limit to federal spending were on this year's agenda. Spouses get a limited franchise. They may talk but not vote.

Nothing is binding on the party or on individuals, but behind the geniality there is a tenor of serious purpose about these conferences. For one thing, they have been useful in putting aside the acrimony that has accompanied the GOP's ideological battles of the past 15 years, particularly the Ford-Reagan strife of 1976. That much is universally conceded. To be sure, not much of the hard-core New Right shows up. Presidential candidate Phil Crane didn't attend, for example, but it doesn't serve his purpose right now to blunt his ideological edges by being seen consorting with all varieties of Republicans. Still, any room that includes Orrin Hatch, Jacob Javits, John Tower, John Heinz, Robert Bauman, Charles Mathias, and Iowa's new conservative senator, Roger Jepsen, must be characterized as inclusive.

It couldn't happen among Democrats. Gather a hundred Democrats from similar positions and the group would splinter into five caucuses, each producing non-negotiable resolutions. In a Democratic gathering, when someone fires up a small pipe, you begin checking the room for uniformed officers and marking the exits. At the Tidewater conferences, everyone knows it's just Representative Millicent Fenwick stoking her briar.

The resolution on SALT II was the topic of the most immediacy on this year's agenda. When it is signed, the treaty will come to the Senate as the most important piece of foreign policy business in the current Congress. On the right wing of the GOP, there is already opposition. The American Conservative Union, which spearheaded the drive against the Panama Canal treaties, has begun to run a 30-minute anti-SALT television program featuring Crane along with senators Barry Goldwater and Jake Garn, Admiral Thomas Moorer and General John Singlaub. Their thesis is that enough is already known about SALT for them to oppose it and that US negotiators are preparing a treaty that will legalize and perpetuate Soviet strategic military superiority.

With Democrats like Henry Jackson, Pat Moynihan and Sam Nunn also recorded as skeptical, the Tidewater resolution can't come as welcome news to the Carter White House. Republicans here consciously intended to embrace Henry Kissinger's concept of

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linkage. The SALT resolution was crafted and maneuvered by Howard Baker, with the aid or acquiescence of such presidential possibilities as Senator Robert Dole, governors Jim Thompson of Illinois and Robert Ray of Iowa and Representative John Anderson, along with the entire GOP leadership team in the Senate. As Baker said, nobody's hands were tied by the Tidewater resolution, but Republican turf was clearly staked out. Both the Russians and the Carter administration have argued that the Senate should consider SALT exclusively on the terms of the treaty. Baker has signaled that he is not prepared to go along with that view and that he has the support of the party's mainstream. Now, if Baker is to be for SALT, there must be some obvious Soviet concession, either before the treaty is initialed or in the area broadly implied by linkage. On the heels of its diplomatic opening with the People's Republic of China and the visit of Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping, it's unlikely that the administration currently welcomes pressure from any source to get tough with the Russians.

Before coming to the Tidewater, Baker announced the formation of a committee to explore his possibilities as a presidential candidate. SALT will be an important component of those prospects. The changes wrought by the minority leader in the Panama Canal treaties, along with his final support for those pacts, definitely provided the treaties' margin of victory in the Senate. But it also got him into hot water with the Republican right wing. Even as this conference was winding down, Senator Paul Laxalt, the manager of the anti-treaty forces and Ronald Reagan's leading backer, was on "Meet the Press" and once more blamed Baker personally for the treaties' passage. "He [Baker] was key, and responsible for the eventual ratification," Laxalt charged, and suggested that Baker might rectify the error with SALT.

When you consider that two years ago the GOP was considered ready to receive last rites, the present condition of the Republican party must be judged blooming. In one sense, you can assess the health of the party by the number of its 1980 presidential aspirants. You can count about a dozen before getting to real dark horses. That's almost as many as sought the Democratic nomination in 1976. When a nomination is worth having, it tends to draw a crowd. The 1978 elections marked a considerable rebound, particularly in the Midwest, the GOP's most stable base. The recovery in governorships and state legislatures has diminished talk that the party will be gerrymandered out of existence with the reapportionment that follows the 1980 census. Further, prospects actually are not so bad for Republicans to take over the Senate after the 1982 elections, unless old internal divisions once again set back the recovery process.

Republicans view Jimmy Carter as weak and growing weaker, and the polls substantiate that view. The CBS-*New York Times* poll of late January indicates that the aura of Camp David is wearing off fast. Approval of the president's job performance is down to 42 percent, his foreign policy rating has plummeted from the Camp David high of 54 percent to 34 percent, and his economic rating remains at a low of 28 percent. Significantly, the sharpest drop in Carter's approval has come among Democrats, where he has lost an incredible 32 points since September. At the moment, only a third of the Democrats polled said they wanted Carter as the party's 1980 nominee and less than half said they'd vote for him in another contest against Gerald Ford.

Numbers like these have Republicans convinced that Carter can be beaten even though his budget and State of the Union rhetoric indicate an intention to occupy territory held by the GOP since Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. By 1980, they reason, Carter, competence, and the quality of presidential leadership will be the major issues. John Connally declared as much when he announced his candidacy. In facing its three great crises, Connally said, America had summoned forth its finest leaders—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. Claiming a crisis of similar dimensions arises from present domestic and international circumstance, Connally summoned himself. In fact, Connally *is* often cited in Republican circles as the American most qualified to be president. He figures his greatest asset is his image as a tough, experienced executive who understands politics and gets things done. After four years of Jimmy Carter, he thinks the country may be ready for his sort of presidency.

Connally's problem is that his self-image doesn't square with his public image. Others see in Connally the essence of a Texas wheeler-dealer. Then there's Nixon. Richard Nixon is the man who inspired John Connally to switch parties; John Connally is the man Nixon hoped would succeed him in the Oval Office. And there's Watergate. Connally was acquitted by the jury in the milk fund bribery trial, and many careful observers believe that the government didn't come close to proving its case against him. Still, polls taken at the time indicated that the public didn't really accept the verdict; rather, it believed he was probably guilty and just slipped off the hook. Connally's chief problem is doubt about his electability. Of all potential GOP nominees, he is probably the one least able to draw Democratic votes. To win, the GOP must nominate a candidate able to draw more votes than merely those of the party's dwindling faithful.

Many Republicans believe their best hope of finding an electable nominee lies in turning away from all the old faces, especially Ford and Reagan. As Ed Muskie was among Democratic hopefuls in 1972, Reagan now is the acknowledged 1980 front-runner, with all the dangers inherent in that designation. His backers know he must win early or he is finished. The major threat to

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accomplishing this comes not in the emergence of a major rival from the moderate wing of the GOP, but in the proliferation of competitors for primary votes in his conservative base—namely Connally, Phil Crane, Robert Dole and, perhaps, Jesse Helms as a favorite son in North Carolina, a crucial Reagan state in 1976. The presidential prospects of all these men depend on Reagan's fading early, and their presence in the primaries can only help assure that he does.

One of those commonly counted as a prospective new face is Illinois Governor Jim Thompson, who told reporters here that he has no intention of being a presidential candidate in 1980. Thompson has been fielding inquiries about his presidential ambitions since he rolled up a 1.4 million vote landslide victory in 1974, and he still leaves loopholes. It may be that Thompson merely feels that other candidates, in adopting Jimmy Carter's 1976 start-early strategy, are fighting the last war. When everyone else starts early, it may be best to lie back while the winnowing-out process gets under way. Carefully avoiding categorical language, Thompson said he was not actually pledging to complete his term. In the old cat-and-mouse game between presidential possibilities and the press, Jim Thompson wins points for taking himself out while still keeping his options open. Given the shifting sands of Republican presidential politics, temporarily sidelining oneself may be a sensible strategy.

Ken Bode

Corporate failure is a feast for lawyers.

The Bankruptcy Hustle

by Anne Colamosca

Few Americans can relish the prospect that President Carter's inflation program will bring on a recession later this year—except perhaps the band of consultants, appraisers, accountants and (especially) lawyers known as "the bankruptcy ring." Like a flight of vultures during a drought, the ring thrives on economic hard times, wheeling about unsteady corporate victims and waiting for one to drop. But more like Dracula than a vulture, the ring pounces fastest where there is still lifeblood to drain. Exorbitant fees paid to members of the ring sometimes are the final blow to a debt-ridden company. If the economy goes bad, companies will falter, investors and employees will suffer, but the ring will make millions.

As one of the final acts of its 1978 session, Congress rammed through a new bankruptcy bill widely heralded as bringing order, dignity and economic sense to bankruptcy proceedings. In the area of consumer bankruptcies, the new legislation undoubtedly has some merit, but where business failures are concerned, the main impact of the Bankruptcy Code of 1978—which will take effect in October—will be to greatly increase the income that the bankruptcy specialists will make on each corporate collapse. Nor is there any offsetting benefit. One of the few virtues of the familiar Chapter 10-Chapter 11 bankruptcy game was that the public interest could sometimes make itself felt through the muscle-flexing of the Securities and Exchange Commission. The amount of bloodletting by companies in the form of fees was often curtailed by SEC interference. But the 1978 bill puts a sharp limit on that agency's surveillance and therefore leaves the victims of bankruptcy even less protected than before the "reform" legislation was passed last fall. Even with the SEC bird-dogging the bankruptcy courts, the number of companies that failed, went into reorganization proceedings and were then liquidated is staggering—three out of every four companies that enter court proceedings never come out alive. Now, with increased fees and little outside interference, there's a good chance that even fewer companies will climb back to solvency.

This curtailment of SEC power may have huge impact—far beyond the further enrichment of an already wealthy courthouse gang. The nation's financial structure has become so unstable in an era of volatile inflation and soaring interest rates that bankruptcy has become almost commonplace for giant corporations with thousands of employees and a critical role in the national economy. Indeed, giant bankrupt-

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cies have become an increasingly common characteristic of the financial crises that have occurred in each of the post-Vietnam recessions. In 1969-1970, Penn Central went under and Chrysler nearly did. The years 1974-1975 saw W. T. Grant, Interstate Stores, Botany Industries, Alan Wood Steel and Equity Funding—in addition to thousands of smaller companies—go belly up. The high interest rates of the past few months have already contributed to pushing the giant $2-billion Food Fair over the edge, and some shrewd economists believe that the Philadelphia-based grocery chain's troubles are only a harbinger of more bankruptcies to come.

Each time a new bankruptcy occurs, it is goldrush time for the lawyers, as they compete vigorously for the spoils. Last fall, the Philadelphia bankruptcy coterie howled with anguish when Food Fair management opted to move the proceedings to a New York court, where dozens of local law firms sent out platoons of experts to "resuscitate" the plagued food company. "We deserved it," groused one distraught Philadelphia lawyer. "Why should New York get all the juicy ones?" Those who closely follow the dramatics of the bankruptcy courts note a territorial competitiveness among the rings—New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles. Each group is very inbred and fights hard to keep business on its own turf. Moving the Food Fair bankruptcy was a cruel affront to the Philadelphia bunch.

And hard-won local reputations can't afford to be downgraded at a time like this, with the stakes getting bigger by the month. "The new legislation is definitely a lawyers' bill," says plain-speaking Rufus Reynolds of Greensboro, North Carolina, one of the most respected bankruptcy judges in the country. Reynolds estimates that lawyers' fees will increase by at least 25 percent over the next year or so. Bankruptcy lawyers charge about the same fees as those in other specialties—usually $100 to $200 an hour. But as one critic points out, "There's nobody around to turn off the meter, especially with the SEC out of the picture. The whole fee thing is in the hands of the bankruptcy judges—most of whom used to be, or are still, part of the ring themselves." A young New York lawyer in a prestigious labor law firm said, "We used to turn over our bankruptcy cases to somebody else. No more. There's too much money in it." Indeed, many bankruptcy specialists are being courted for jobs by top-flight law firms that previously eschewed any connections with a field they used to consider to be akin to ambulance chasing.

What has made the practice of bankruptcy law so lucrative? To begin with, it's been centered on a court system that differs markedly from normal courts. In bankruptcies, judges not only hear cases, but often get intimately involved in the actual administration of the cases that come before them, and with the lawyers involved. "People who observe bankruptcy courts see a pool of lawyers on intimate terms with the judge. They seem to play musical chairs from one bankruptcy to another," says Professor Frank Kennedy of the University of Michigan Law School. "The same lawyer may act as receiver in one bankruptcy, counsel for the creditors in another, and as representative of the debtor in a third case. They all look as though they are having a jolly good time dividing up the spoils—before anybody else has a chance to get near them."

Under both old and new laws, lawyers are paid off ahead of all creditors involved with the bankrupt company. In addition, medical and pension benefits are decided on the basis of whatever is left over in the shrunken pool of company assets. The pattern of a reorganization is usually to shave down costs and in most bankruptcy proceedings many employees lose their jobs. Some 5500 Food Fair workers lost their jobs in the New York area alone.

At some point during reorganization proceedings, bankruptcy specialists on Wall Street make a decision—usually based on inside information—about whether it is worthwhile to buy up blocks of a bankrupt company's stock. If they hear that the company has a chance to make it back through reorganization, they push hard to corner the market on the rock-bottom low stock—thereby making a killing after the successful revival is a sure thing. When Interstate Stores, a retailing conglomerate that went broke in the mid-1970s, went through Chapter 10 proceedings, many shareholders sold their stock to bankruptcy sharks for next to nothing. The Wall Street specialists cleaned up several months later when one subsidiary of the revived

The New American Hustler

America is still the land of opportunity, but the opportunities have changed somewhat under conditions of what some call "late capitalism." This is the fifth in an occasional series of articles examining new opportunities for riches created by the post-industrial age and the mixed economy.

Modern entrepreneurs are likely to share three characteristics in contrast to their counterparts a century ago. First, what they are selling tends to be more amorphous and ephemeral, and several steps removed from the production of goods and services that add directly to the national prosperity. Second, they often depend on the existence of a large government sector, either as a customer or as a generator of the need for their services. Third, the new American hustlers are likely to be politically liberal, perhaps because their prosperity depends on the society the liberal vision has created.

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company, Toys 'R Us, came back with a real bounce. Unfortunately, most shareholders have few inside bankruptcy connections and are usually happy to unload their stock—which they deem worthless—to anybody who will buy.

While the stockholders are wondering what to do, the reorganization process gets into full swing. "I don't know how it happens," says a top SEC official, "but somehow the same law firms find out first when a company is going under and they scurry around lining up business."

Lining up the all-powerful creditors' committee always has had top priority for bankruptcy lawyers. Creditor committees review all company finances, negotiate a reorganization plan, and make recommendations to other more minor committees. The legal counsel for the committee ends up making more money than any other consultant in the case. Another set of lawyers represents the debtor firm. The two sides are pitted against each other in working out a reorganization plan, and the longer it takes, the more each makes. With the SEC made powerless to do much under the new law, no one but the presiding bankruptcy judge is on hand to make sure the process does not go on forever.

Most law firms get tips on new bankruptcy cases from other lawyers who are most anxious to make a generous forwarding fee—which according to the trade amounts to one-third of the specialist's fees. The only moral judgment that the American Bar Association makes on this whole arrangement is that the forwarder actually do some of the work—a stipulation that is more often than not ignored. Since many bankruptcy firms specialize in either creditor or debtor work, they frequently get hefty forwarding fees from each other. In this way, law firms can make good money from both the creditor and debtor sides at the same time—by direct fees paid to them, and forwarding fees paid by another law firm.

An executive of a bankrupt company is hardly a man who is dealing from strength and is therefore in no position to set limits on the lawyers who confront him. And a busy, undermanned bankruptcy bench is often a bad setter of limits on lawyers. "We do not have a good system of accountability," says Professor Kennedy. "Cost are pretty much up to the judge, and lawyers know very well just about how much each judge will tolerate," adds Harvard law professor Vern Countryman. "Because they are so involved in the cases, many lawyers tend to think of them as friends."

In significant ways, the bankruptcy judges become part of the bankruptcy clique not by choice but because their judicial colleagues tend to regard them with disdain. Traditionally, bankruptcy referees (as they were called until recently) were far removed from the lofty respectability of the conventional bench. Between 1892 and 1946—that is, from the time when the original federal bankruptcy code was passed until they were made salaried officers of the federal courts—referees were forced to make their living from commissions drawn from the bankrupt estates they administered. That allowed 50 years for a patronage system to grow up in many parts of the country. Federal district judges have direct authority over bankruptcy judges, but usually they do not take much interest. In recent years, Congress has tried to extend more power and prestige to the bankruptcy judges, but the federal bench won't have it. "It is a major threat to many federal district judges that an independent, prestigious bankruptcy court be created," says a well-known New York bankruptcy lawyer. "Many federal district judges have put the squeeze on bankruptcy judges in little peevish ways. They have left the judges with the worst clerks and very little support to get their work done."

Chief Justice Warren Burger's well-publicized opposition to the provision of the 1978 legislation which upgrades the rank of the bankruptcy judges is symptomatic of the disdain in which the conventional bar holds the bankruptcy bar. This pointed aloofness creates a psychological atmosphere in which, being unloved by others, the bankruptcy pros must huddle with each other for warmth. "It's not unusual for one bankruptcy lawyer to see his opponent in a case coming out of the judge's chambers with his arm slung around the judge," points out Professor Countryman, one of the ring's biggest critics.

To be fair, the Bankruptcy Act of 1978 does attempt to remove bankruptcy judges from their heavy involvement with administrative duties by creating a US trustee who would take over much of the paper work. But a cost-conscious Congress included the trustee only as an experiment in a limited number of judicial districts, and this pilot program could easily be dropped. This would make the judges more powerful than ever. The new law basically does away with the old Chapter 10 proceedings under which a bankruptcy was shifted into a federal district court with an independent trustee appointed to manage the company, and strong SEC counseling. There will be some cases in which the SEC can get involved, but for a judge to consent to this, he must have reasonable grounds for suspicion that the old management had committed fraud.

Chapter 10 proceedings—usually reserved for the biggest and most complicated reorganizations—were anathema to most bankruptcy insiders, and to bankrupt companies' old management. In Chapter 10 proceedings (as opposed to Chapter 11 cases), the independent trustee (rather than the creditors' counsel) made the highest fees and ran the show. Old management and its lawyers were shunted aside on the theory that fresh hands had a better chance of restoring a company to health. Many advocates of Chapter 10 feel strongly that self-interested creditors—whose only goal is to get their money back—are not the right

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people to run a company that owes them money.

There is no question that Chapter 10 had its faults. Proceedings were slow and expensive. Even the Equity Funding case, the SEC's pride and joy—because it was a successful overhaul of a fraud-ridden giant—cost over $10 million in consultants' fees alone.

But existence of the Chapter 10 alternative often kept fees down in Chapter 11 cases. Lawyers had an incentive to hurry their work to placate the SEC, which often threatened to file motions turning Chapter 11 cases into Chapter 10 cases. "The most expensive fighting in a Chapter 11 case," says Professor Kennedy, "is over what the reorganization plan will be, and how it works. When nobody compromises, it runs into millions." According to a high SEC official, "Now that Chapter 10 has been done away with, we can no longer threaten. We are merely advisers to a bankruptcy bench that never even listened to us when we had power. It was only the federal bench that worked well with the SEC. Fees will be out of sight."

A prime example of an SEC success was the case of the textile giant, United Merchants and Manufacturers, the largest company ever to emerge intact from a Chapter 11 proceeding. The SEC muscled lawyers to conclude the case in under one year. Payments to consultants, lawyers and others came to $4.1 million—a bargain compared to the eight million dollars racked up so far for the liquidated W. T. Grant Co. (and the end not in sight until the 1980s) and a staggering $50 million in the Penn Central case. The new bankruptcy law, limiting SEC intervention, ensures that corporate failure will continue to be a lawyers' feast.

The US is romanticizing in Asia again, not facing reality.

Our Good China/Bad Japan Syndrome

by Peter W. Stanley

Perhaps the least noted aspect of our new relationship with China is its displacement of Japan as the center of our concern in Asia. This is curious. Only a few months ago, all eyes were on the Japanese economy and the danger it posed to our own. As Japan's trade surplus with us grew to humiliating proportions and the dollar plummeted in value, Japan was ranked with OPEC as an external economic threat of the gravest kind. Not only were Japanese products flooding this country and imperiling jobs and profits, but Japan itself seemed impenetrable to American exporters. As some condemned the Japanese government for irresponsible parochialism and political cowardice in the defense of its home markets, others exposed the practice in some Japanese industries of dumping excess production abroad at, or below, cost. Sober-minded analysts warned that the two economies were structured so differently that in important respects they no longer "fit." Speculation was growing that if these trends continued, political pressure in the United States would lead to increased protectionism of a sort that could ignite a global trade war.

Now we hear little of this. Although the problem remains, public attention has turned to China. To some degree, this is understandable. Most Americans find the restoration of relations with mainland China exciting and promising. In this abrupt turn toward China, however, the United States is also, on a deeper level, acting archetypically. Without denying the uniqueness of the moment, there is a sense in which we stand today in a familiar posture. There is a lesson in self-knowledge to be learned here.

China is, of course, vast, ancient and somewhat mysterious. It is the great mother lode of Asia, both economically and culturally. From the earliest period of American relations with East Asia, this sense of China's present centrality, its great past, and, above all, its extraordinary potential has captured the American imagination.

Precisely because of its vastness and complexity, however, there is more to China than a single mind—or even the mind of a single generation—can encompass. So our view of China has always been highly selective. We have emphasized those aspects of China—real or imagined—that suited some need, or spoke to some fear, interest or predilection rooted in our own lives and the domestic American experience. In other words, we have seen in China what we chose to see.

In the late 18th and very early 19th centuries, when the success of our revolution had shut us out of the

Peter W. Stanley teaches American-East Asian history at Harvard.

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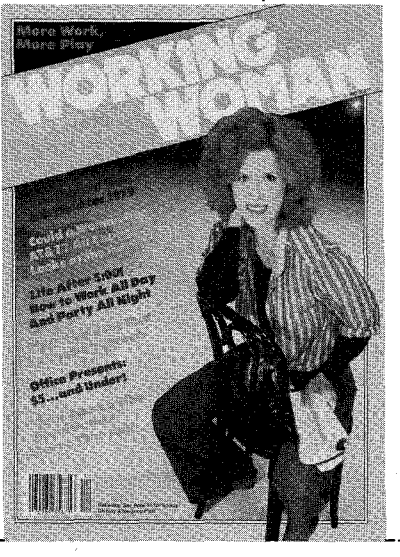

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British imperial trading system, we needed windfall profits to spark the growth of our own indigenous economy and a sure source of luxury goods to gratify our taste for such things as silk and tea. Accordingly, that became the dominant image of China in the American mind. Enormous fortunes were made in a few years and they captured the American imagination, even though the China trade was in reality so precarious that most Americans involved in it lost money, and even the greatest of the American merchant houses faded out during the course of the 19th century.

In the second half of the 19th century, when new currents of missionary zeal flooded American churches and college campuses, our dominant image of China became the dream of converting the Chinese people to Christianity and "saving" China in a single generation. For a time, missionaries were the largest single American interest in China. Very little came of this either, however. In a population numbering hundreds of millions, conversions were counted in the low thousands.

At the very end of the century, when Americans became terrified by the specter of what was then called overproduction, a new imagery arose: that of the fabulous China market, which, if properly developed, would draw off in the form of exports much of the excess capacity of American factories. In fact, American trade with China remained almost trivial. During the 1890s, at the time of all this excitement, China never took more than 1.1 percent of total American exports; the trade peaked in the following decade at a mere 3.5 percent, a figure which it has exceeded only once since then, in 1931.

Similarly, when Japan challenged us earlier in this century for control of the initiative in Asia, we saw in China a valiant, republican, nation-building regime defending itself against fascist aggression. When, during the Cold War, we felt threatened by Communist aggression abroad and subversion within, we turned the image on its head and found in the People's Republic what some candidly called a new variant on the Yellow Horde and, in those who disputed the accuracy of this image, the core of a Communist cell inside the State Department and other domestic institutions.

Now, in the aftermath of Vietnam, when we need to pick up the pieces in Asia—after our decline to strategic parity (if that) with the USSR, when we need a new great power to help us maintain the strategic balance, and after our dawning sense that economic initiative is starting to pass from the Atlantic world and that we are on the verge of a "Pacific century"—now we find in China precisely those qualities of economic and strategic promise we most need, and China has become practically our ally in maintaining Asian stability.

In other words, again and again there has been a kind of intellectual opportunism and emotional self-indulgence in America's approach to China. It is worth noting that, at least in the past, everything we have wanted and thought we saw in China has greatly disappointed us: the number of converts, the size and profitability of trade, the direction of political evolution and the capacity to resist the aggression of our common enemies. In the end, one concludes that the American view of China in the past has been not only opportunistic, but also substantially illusory.

Our view of Japan has been almost precisely the converse of our view of China. Our problem in regard to China has been living with what was not happening, whereas our problem in dealing with Japan has been living with what does happen. This is one reason we tended to be bullish on China whenever we were displeased with or threatened by Japan.

There have, of course, been misapprehensions and illusions in our view of Japan; but on balance, Japan has been of such immediate and direct importance to us for roughly the last 80 years that realities have displaced illusion at the core of our thought. We have not been able to afford the luxury of playing mental games with Japan. Significantly, the role in which America has characteristically cast itself in relation to China is that of the bearer or epitome of modernity and enlightenment—a very amorphous image, considering how subjective enlightenment is and how regularly modernity surprises us by the direction it takes. By contrast, in dealing with the Japanese, we have generally adopted a less cosmic, more measurable identity: namely, that we are bigger, stronger and (at least until now) richer than they are. The imagery of China has been soft, malleable; the imagery of Japan, hard. Generally speaking, our problem in dealing with Japan has not been one of focusing down to reality, but of how to respond to a reality that forces itself on our attention.

Although our relationship with Japan began with overtones of tutorial benevolence—Americans being pleased, even flattered, that Japan was becoming more like us—it is probably fair to say we have never learned to live with the challenge of Japan's success. The turning point in this respect came in the 1890s and the early years of the 20th century. For the first time Japanese industry began to compete successfully against ours in a few markets, notably those of China, and Japanese naval power became a potential threat not only to the Philippines and Hawaii, but conceivably to the Pacific coast of North America. The anomaly is that while Japan, in the period from 1900 to 1940, accounted for twice as much of our foreign trade as China and about 35 to 40 percent of all our trade with Asia, our relations generally deteriorated with Japan, while we persisted resiliently in our hopes for China and its fabulous market.

Part of the reason for this is that while we are used to the idea of being one among several great economic and political powers in the Atlantic world—where we came

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to prominence late, after others had already established themselves—we have tended to believe, at least in this century, that the Pacific is ours. This is one reason earlier generations of American isolationists, such as Douglas MacArthur and Robert A. Taft, with their intense suspicion of Europe and its power politics, were nevertheless receptive to the idea of American expansion and involvement in the Pacific region. There, with European power in headlong decline, we could presumably write our own ticket. Between the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and the renaissance of Russia as a major Asian power only a few years ago, Japan has been the only obstacle in the way of this vision of an American era in the Pacific.

There are sophisticated scholars who contend that until the militarism of the 1930s in Japan there was no inherent incompatability in the interests and ambitions of the United States and Japan. Their argument, which was also voiced at the time by two generations of Japanese civilians, is that, as rising economic and strategic powers, Japan and America shared a fundamental interest in creating an "open door" world in Asia and the Pacific—a world in which peace and relatively open economic systems would maximize the potential for the growth of international trade and investment.

As we now know, this is not the way it worked out. The reasons for the failure of this vision of a peaceful, cooperative economic age in the Pacific are numerous. There were powerful interests within both countries seeking a different structure to the relationship—among them, strategic planners, a variety of high-tariff protectionist interests, imperialists who preferred the idea of nailing down regions that would belong entirely to one country (such as the Philippines for us and Manchuria for them), and racists who could not generate enough trust or a sufficiently broad perspective to imagine a fruitful, cooperative relationship. Moreover, the international environment was not really receptive to this sort of economic diplomacy in an age when Chinese nationalism finally began to become effective and when Leninism was providing the world with a revolutionary ideology that portrayed both Japan and America as capitalist exploiters.

What is particularly relevant for us is the way in which Americans have responded to this sort of frustration of their hopes for the relationship with Japan. In the past, at least, when Japan has proved too much to take, Americans have characteristically responded by turning back toward the "soft" imagery of a malleable China—a China whose tremendous economic potential, whose possibilities for cooptation onto our side of the international balance, whose enormous historical, cultural, and now ideological weight with the rest of Asia might provide us with an alternative to Japan as the focus of our Asian policy. We have done this repeatedly during the present century. The Wilsonian-era imagery of a republican, liberalizing, modernizing China followed directly upon our alienation from Japan's economic offensives in Manchuria. The idealization of Kuomintang China as part of the free world's defense against fascist aggression arose not primarily because we sympathized with China, but because Japanese militarism frightened and repelled us.

The concomitant of this turn toward a hopeful imagery of China at such times has been a tendency to construe the very real and often consequential issues dividing us from Japan in such a way as to derive from them a view of the Japanese character and Japanese sociology that made things much worse between the two countries than they need have been. In moments of international stress, the imagery of Japan almost invariably turns toward conspiracy, insidiousness, deceit, fanaticism, regimentation, and a kind of discipline and loyalty that is somehow less than fully human. This tendency in the imagery reminds us that we are dealing here with something very unusual, a big power relationship that is also an interracial relationship where distrust and caricature come easily.

So if we now find ourselves in a position in which Japan's economic strength and growing political and cultural influence throughout the Pacific world threaten us in significant ways, and if we find ourselves taking a new look at China and discovering there a potential way around some of our dilemmas with Japan, there is a sense in which we have been here before. It is worth realizing that, at least historically, Japanese-American difficulties have never been resolved or escaped by redirecting our gaze at China. And Sino-American relations have never offered us the real rewards involved in a successful, fruitful resolution of our ongoing relationship with Japan.

Now that Teng Hsiao-ping has returned home and the heady talk of billions of dollars in Sino-American trade has begun to subside, we still face the reality of a $10.6 billion annual deficit in our trade with Japan. This imperils not only our own economy, but the whole world trading system. Because of it, we must confront at least three major challenges. Two of these—the less important—involve pressing Japan to accept its economic and strategic responsibilities: additional action must be taken to open Japan's domestic markets and break down the maze of obstacles confronting foreigners, and serious consideration needs to be given to Japanese rearmament in the hope of ending Japan's "free ride" and reducing America's defense expenditures in Asia. But as Ezra F. Vogel will argue in his forthcoming book, *Japan as No. 1: Lessons for America* (Harvard University Press), our most critical challenge is internal. We need to shed our national *hubris*, recognize the social and organizational bases of Japan's success and begin the long, difficult process of adapting our institutions to compete effectively in "the Pacific century." We dare not allow euphoria over China to divert us from this task.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on theater

The Body's Prisoner

The Elephant Man (St. Peter's) is the best new play by an American that I've seen or read since Sam Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime* (1972). But this opinion needs qualification: and the qualification is the base of the comment that follows. The author, Bernard Pomerance, is an American living in London. Shepard, in fact, was living in London when he wrote *The Tooth of Crime* and it had its première there, but that was mere coincidence; Shepard's play is American in every molecule. Pomerance's play is not, and not just because of its subject.

The subject is factual. A young man named John Merrick lived in the London Hospital from 1886 to his death in 1890. He was grossly deformed from birth. His face was distorted hideously, his right arm was a long lump (though his left arm was perfect), great blobs of spongy brown flesh hung from his skull and torso, and he gave off—before hospital care—a stench. A surgeon named Frederick Treves discovered him in a carnival where he was being exhibited as The Elephant Man. Eventually, Treves took him into his hospital, the London, and a fund was raised to tend Merrick for life, which was short. During that life, Treves discovered that Merrick was exceptionally intelligent and imaginative. Because Treves was known, his ward became known. In time, many of the famous and high-born, the celebrated actress Madge Kendal and the Princess Alexandra among them, visited Merrick and became friendly with him.

Pomerance read about Merrick in Treves's memoirs and in *The Elephant Man* by Ashley Montagu (Ballantine, 1973). Presumably, four aspects of the story drew Pomerance to write a play about it: the isolation by deformity; the contrast between the outer and the inner man; the fact that so many distinguished people enjoyed his company; and the fact that, during his years in the hospital, Merrick worked on a model of a nearby church, St. Phillip's, which he finished just before he died. (The model and Merrick's bones are still at the London Hospital.)

Now the reason why this American author's residence in London is not a coincidence, is absolutely central, is that he has written an English play. *The Elephant Man* has a superficial resemblance to Brecht: each of the 21 brief scenes has a title, in the program anyway, taken from the text of each scene, and the audience is sometimes directly addressed. These incidentals, plus the fact that Pomerance did a version of *A Man's a Man* produced in London two years ago, have brought this play the label "Brechtian" in some comment. Not remotely true, for at least two reasons: his aims have nothing to do with "presentation" or *Verfremdung*. Pomerance is writing in one line of the post-Angry English playwrights (there are other lines), a group that includes such people as Charles Wood, David Hare, Ann Jellicoe and Alan Bennett. Unique though each is, they share some qualities; and the head of their line, I would hazard, is the early John Arden—and *his* antecedent, as I think he once owned, was John Masefield, the Masefield of *Pompey the Great* and *The Tragedy of Nan*. Those in this "school," differing widely in subjects, share a style of poetic pinpoint understatement, poetry *through* understatement. The diction is spare, tart, nuggety. The dialogue is engraved with tense rhythms and small flowers of lyricism. The dialectic—the tension—comes from flash-and-silence in the language itself, as well as from the drama of the action. These writers combine burnished English phraseology with the English stiff upper lip. The fire, which is there, generally seems to filter through reticence.

The fundamental strength and the oddity of this new play is that the American Pomerance has written it—well—in this quintessentially English style. In the last scene, the head of the hospital, Gomm, reads Treves a long letter that he is sending to *The Times*, explaining what he will do with the residue of the fund for the deceased Merrick. Gomm asks Treves whether he wants to add anything to the letter. Treves declines and leaves. Gomm reads the rest of the letter aloud. Treves returns.

Treves: I did think of one small thing.

Gomm: It's too late, I'm afraid. It is done.

End of the play.

This spareness, which governs the structure as well as the writing, very pleasurably embraces leaps of time and place, collapses complex action to clear strophes, condenses development of relations. So it's no irrelevant nationalist interest which makes me underscore that Pomerance has written in an English manner. Obviously, because his subject was 19th-century England, he had at least to attempt some period flavor. But beyond that, he chose an English dramaturgic style, which, in diction and structure, carries a vision of what one wants a play and the theater itself to *be*. That style is the play's underpinning, even when other matters falter.

Pomerance was not rooting out the pathetic in Merrick's story, though his play has pathos: he wanted to use Merrick as a metaphor. Immediately, one thinks of another relatively recent

Films Worth Seeing

Autumn Sonata. Ingmar Bergman directs Ingrid Bergman and Liv Ullmann in a mother-daughter explosion. Splendid.

The Innocent. Visconti's last. Tiresome solipsistic amours of rich rake, Rome, c. 1895, but ravishing to look at.

Max Havelaar. Dutch film about Dutch rule in Indonesia, 150 years ago. Very long, but not draggy. Woodenly written, but so well acted and directed that it's always involving.

Superman. About Superman. Could have been better, but it's good enough.

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play about a physical anomaly, Peter Handke's *Kaspar*, in which there is no pathos whatsoever but which transforms the story of Kaspar Hauser, the teenage boy who grew up without any knowledge of speech, into a superlative dramatic poem about language as liberator, certifier, doom. Pomerance was after the thematic significances in the Merrick story, but the results in metaphor—and this is the play's thinness—tend to be patent or a bit strained. At any rate, they don't enlarge us, as *Kaspar* does. Pomerance explores the beauty in this appallingly ugly man; Merrick's visible loneliness among people whose loneliness is less visible but there; his visible deformation within a society whose deformations are less visible; and the fact that each of his visitors finds in Merrick what he or she needs to find. (Treves says to a bishop: "He makes all of us think he is deeply like ourselves. And yet we're not like each other. I conclude that we have polished him like a mirror, and shout hallelujah when he reflects us to the inch.") These insights, as used, are not much more than serviceable. The most suggestive of the lot is the one that is touched most lightly. At one point, the actress Mrs. Kendal, speaking of women's good looks, says: "It is a rather arbitrary gift." Near the end, an orderly, bringing Merrick his lunch, talks abut a young woman's sudden death. He says: "It's all so—what's that word? Forgot it. It means chance-y." He leaves. Then Merrick, who (as the doctors know) is dying, dies. The orderly returns and, before he notices that Merrick is dead, says: "I remember it, Mr. Merrick. The word is arbitrary."

That is the granite of the play. Clearly, it's not only death that is arbitrary. Life, as Merrick's extreme case shows, is much more cruelly so. For those of us who can't quite believe that Merrick's affliction was somehow an element in a Grand Design, the hard job is to find a pattern of sorts for one's self amidst the arbitrariness. Man's great blessing/curse, the gift of logic, keeps ramming into the "chance-y" illogic of existence. That, for me, is the great theme at which the play only glances. (There's irony, too. Merrick's chief labor is a model of a place consecrated to the idea of a Divine Mind, and the model itself is a triumph of *his* power to design.)

But in terms of its theater rather than its themes—and *The Elephant Man* is proof that a play can be seen that way—it lives on the stage with wiry, quick intelligence, with a quick and lasting grip. The scenes move well, join and grow like crystals. There's a necessary and good basic theatrical device. Pomerance, for several reasons, didn't want to load the actor who plays Merrick with horror-film make-up that would make Quasimodo look like Puck, so the actor simply contorts his speech and body and is first seen, clad only in breech-clout, while Treves addresses the audience pointing at slides of the actual Elephant Man. Thus we know what Merrick is supposed to look like and we see how people react to him, but the actor is able to perform and we are able to watch.

What we watch is the growth of models and the (implicative) poignancy and futility of that growth: not just the model of the church, but the models of behavior and thought, which Merrick takes mainly from Treves, and the model of the lost paradise through Merrick's relation with Mrs. Kendal. (In an inevitable scene, she shows him her body, because he has never seen a woman and because she knows he is dying.) There is a wry dream episode—Treves's dream in which he and Merrick

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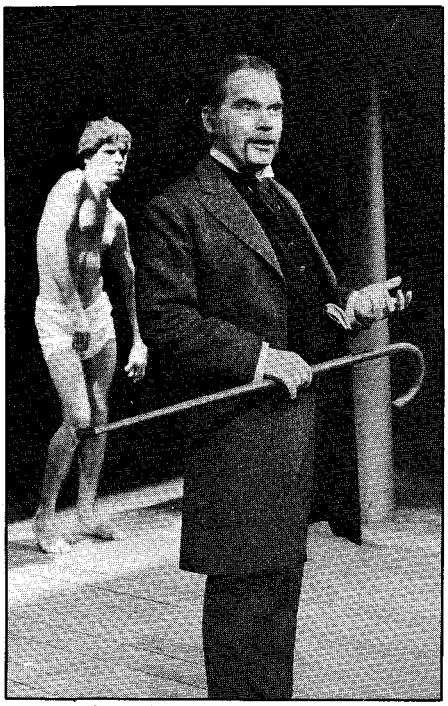
exchange places—that gives us the chance to see Merrick as normal and that underscores the arbitrary fate that kept him from it. With its English astringency of diction and structure, the play itself is an *enclosing* model.

The production understands the play excellently. Two quick reservations about the direction by Jack Hofsiss. I disliked the solo cello music used throughout, especially the appearance of the cellist himself on stage at the beginning of Act Two. And the symbolic handling of the church model once or twice becomes blatant. Otherwise I can only congratulate Pomerance on finding a director who understands the mode and delicacy of his play so well, who concentrates on refinement of the acting rather than a self-serving "concept." I saw Hofsiss's work once before—Thomas Babe's *Rebel Women*—but that play was so cumbersome that it handcuffed him. Here he makes the most, legitimately, out of a really responsive script.


Susan Cook

Philip Anglim and Kevin Conway in *The Elephant Man*

Kevin Conway, the Treves, is fine and once again surprising. After some blustering, easily effective parts, Conway moved well ahead with his George in *Of Mice and Men* (*TNR*, January 25, 1975). Then he did some more blustering in two films, *F.I.S.T.* and *Paradise Alley*. Now he is acting again, moving forward again. That he comes up with a credible toff's accent is not nothing, but more important, he gives us a quiet, vulnerable, humane man unlike any role I've seen him in, and solid.

Philip Anglim, the Merrick, creates, without any attempt at heart-tug, the prisonhouse of flesh and its prisoner. Carole Shelley, an English actress who has been here since 1964, has been notable before mostly as a merchant of birdy brightness. As Mrs. Kendal, with the help of Hofsiss, she is lovely with nuance and feeling. Richard Clarke, as Gomm, has the right tired stiffness. I.M. Hobson, who looks something like a gentile Zero Mostel, is much more than a spherical actor living by his width. In three roles—carnival man, bishop, hospital orderly—Hobson's unctuous slyness or benignity or efficiency helps to furnish the scene.

Let's note that the producer of this Off-Broadway show was Richmond Crinkley, who is the new executive director of the Beaumont. Can this mean there's hope for the Beaumont?

Sport into Dance

IceDancing and the Pilobolus Dance Theater

That dancers, like athletes, train for fitness, strength and coordination doesn't as a rule make the line between dancing and athletics hard to draw. Athletes compete in arenas where results are measured by the clock, by the yardstick, by points. "Good form" (beyond what such standards may imply) is incidental. In a dance, on the other hand, while some technical features may be crudely quantifiable, the overall impression is not. Athletes vie to upgrade the performance of the human machine; the body is their subject and object, the means and the end of what they do. The art of dancing begins when athletically disciplined bodies set off exploring the spaces of imagination and the body becomes a vehicle for the mind.

The British ice skater John Curry, 1976 Olympic gold medalist and World Champion, now resident in Greenwich Village, and the Pilobolus Dance Theater challenge the easy distinctions between dance and athletics. They take off from an athletic base with an aesthetic intention, which by the definition I've suggested makes them dancers all right. But how far does their intention carry them *beyond* their base? Put another way: do they offer dressed-up displays of physical prowess or the experience of unfolding vision?

To take John Curry's measure, we would need 20/20 hindsight over, say, the next quarter century. By the facts of his career, he stands close to sport, but he works hard to maximize the distance. After collecting his medals and devising *The John Curry Theatre of Skating* for London, he opened a new program in November at the Felt Forum at Madison Square Garden; following a limited engagement, it moved to the Minskoff Theatre for a Broadway run that extended well into January; in March and April it goes on to Los Angeles and San Francisco prior to a summer tour of Europe and a return to New York in the fall. The name of the show, *IceDancing*, means to make a point, and so does the show itself. Curry has enlisted the services of numerous choreographers, some young, some established, and handpicked a pocket-size company of dance-trained skaters. The clear accent on movement over spectacle, on detail over massed effect, sets *IceDancing* apart from the traditional ice revue. And Curry invites the dance critics.

Some of them (disobligingly, in my opinion, despite their patent desire to praise) have gushed that Curry has introduced a "new art form." That was not his purpose, and he has certainly done nothing of the kind, which in itself is by no means to his discredit. A very few sections of *IceDancing* in one way or another do approximate the feel of exhibition dancing and ballet, but if there are unique expressive possibilities in the kinetic properties of skating, Curry and his company have yet to unlock them.

Their show very neatly defines the chief problem of dancing on skates—the bladed boot. Its heaviness does not enhance the human form, and, being inflexible at the ankle, it makes pointing the feet impossible, which stunts the line from hip through thigh and calf to toe. The supposed advantages are not unmixed blessings either. Yes, a skater can traverse the stage in a single step;

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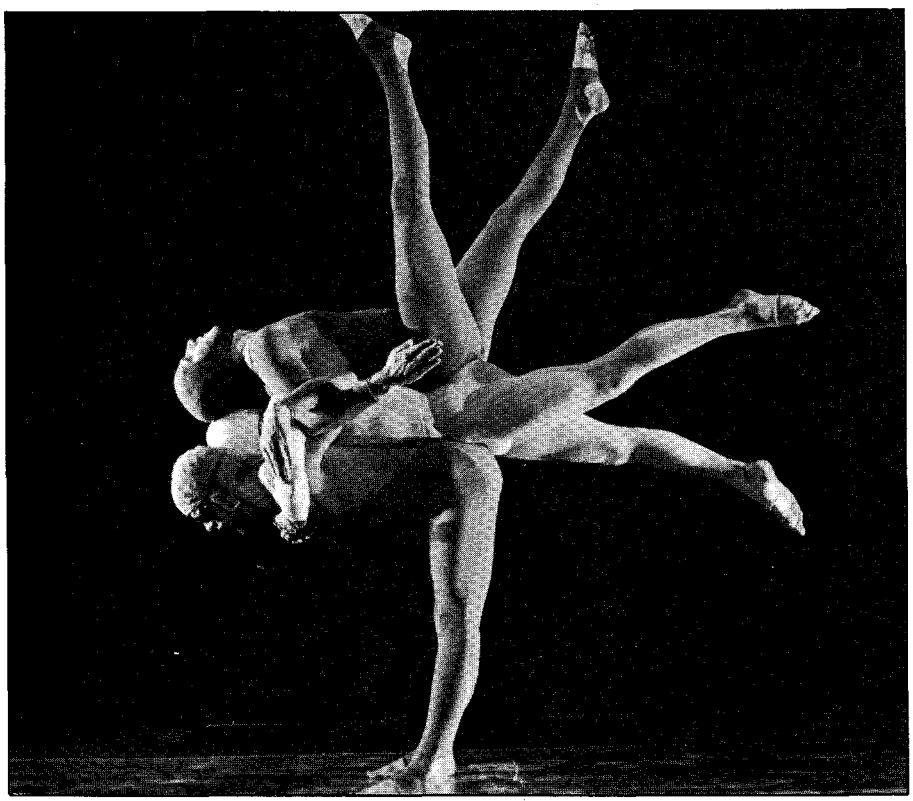
but such effortless mobility drastically cuts the expressive range of the footwork. Yes, a skater can travel and hold a pose; so can the Venus de Milo if you put her on casters: the interest in either case is essentially sculptural. Yes, skaters, who move at speeds up to 40 miles per hour, gather tremendous momentum; but in the leaps and spins that turn such momentum to account, their forms dematerialize in a blur. At every point, the mechanics of skating oppose the articulations of dance.



The title work of the Pilobolus Dance Theater, from *Pilobolus*. Photo by Tim Matson.

When Curry approached the methodical Twyla Tharp for a solo, she told him to show her "everything that one can do skating on the ice," took in his three-hour demonstration, and set the piece *After All* to music by Albinoni. Widely admired at its premier at the *Superskates III* fundraiser in 1976, it was seen (not, however, by me) at the Felt Forum, but proved unadaptable to the dimensions of the Minskoff. So, at every Broadway performance, Curry danced—and that is the right word—the fabulously intricate *Feux Follets*, created for him by the Royal Ballet's principal choreographer, Kenneth MacMillan, to the mercurial fifth of Liszt's Transcendental Etudes. In the four-minute solo, Curry flew over the racing base of his flashing, whirling blades through designs of fleet brilliance, unfolding the harmony of his Apollonian line, triumphant even over the inevitable flexed foot.

Throughout the Broadway program, Curry made the most of his opportunities, but nowhere else did they take him so authentically into the realm of dancing. Norman Maen made him a piece to Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*, alluding to but prettifying past recognition the legendary Nijinsky's ruttish bucolic. For all Curry's devotion and that of the lovely Cathy Foulkes, whose assurance enhances her winning grace, it hovered at the level of a derivative "impression." In *Tango-Tango*, which has a Stravinsky score, Peter Martins of the New York City Ballet built into the stop-start, tight phrasing a kind of kinetic equivalent for the analytical containment of his own performance manner. But while such reserve (at least in the case of Martins) plays a crucial part in the forging of a peerless presentational style, as choreographic substance it is brittle and thin. Curry and his partner, the fiercely accomplished, forbidding beauty JoJo Starbuck, executed the torrid rite of seduction with precision and daring. But, on the whole, the number seemed what Pynchon branded the tango in a memorable passage in *V.*: "a dance for automata."

The rest of the program was straight ice-revue material—some of it ennobled and refined, to be sure, but ice-revue material nonetheless, designed to give the skaters a turn to show their stuff. Even when effective, such showcases do not quite amount to dances; they differ aesthetically in degree and also in kind. In showcases, the technical figure is the compositional unit: they are modular. Dances worthy of the name are integrative, subsuming the figures they use into coherent, *necessary* designs. Patricia Dodd's sailing way with a phrase made of the Famous Dancer's solo in *Palais de Glace* one of the highlights of the evening. But the solo's build in itself was of no special interest. Only Jean-Pierre Bonnefous, like Peter Martins with the New York City Ballet, transcended the limitations of the exhibition piece. In *Icemoves* he, too, gave the performer chances to shine, but he did more. Wedding vitality to a delicate sense of balance, sequence and proportion, he came up with the program's one really shapely and gladdening divertissement. Can this line be pursued much further? *IceDancing* had its merits, and it confirmed Curry's artistry beyond doubt; yet it presents too checkered a picture to predict the further evolution of the sport of skating as it aspires to dance. But whatever its incidental accomplishments, as long as skating keeps taking the lead from ballet, ballroom dancing and other fully articulated forms, it seems doomed to remain a pallid, hand-me-down sort of art.

Pilobolus is an original, which from sheer innocence began setting up its own categories from the start. Its nucleus formed in Alison Chase's modern-dance class at Dartmouth in 1970, when the college was still for men only, and the idea does not seem farfetched that the three original Piloboli (two of whom—Moses Pendleton and Jonathan Wolken—are still among the present complement of six) signed up for the brand-new course as a kicky way around a physical-education requirement. But if the earliest pieces, some of which may still

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be seen today, stress mass, muscle and leverage, even they are not well described as "gymnastic." Too much else goes into them: tumbling, clowning, a freewheeling, unruly sense of play. The more recent work goes further, and in many directions, adding by turns and in conjunction lyricism, drama, pathos. The Piloboli have kept their wit about them and surrounded it with foils.

Just back from touring India, Pilobolus (to be seen in coming months in such far-flung locations as Puerto Rico, Montreal, Hawaii, Arizona, and Washington, DC) gave their homecoming recitals in January in Stratford at the Connecticut Center for the Performing Arts. To eyes acquainted with their later creations, *Ciona* (1974), which opened the performances, seems for all its varied virtuosity a simple review of their movement vocabulary and physical equipment as dauntless aerialists, constructors of breathing architecture, and acrobatic sculptors of tentacular human masses. Similarly, the early quartet *Walklyndon* (1971) lays out the basics of Pilobolus humor. By gesture, mime and timing the four men (Pendleton, Wolken, Robby Barnett and Michael Tracy) make a set of variations of comparatively simple motifs of walking, running, standing still and taking a pratfall into a gallery of wicked sketches of social behavior. Choreographed, like the entire Pilobolus canon, by the person or persons who would first perform them, neither of these two pieces bears the singular, quirky stamp of what came between them in the Stratford program: *Lost in Fauna* (1976), a solo by Alison Chase (who in 1973 was invited to join what was then an all-male quartet). The curtain rises on a flounced skirt, standing as if untenanted by itself at the side of the stage. Its ruffles hide the dancer, who proceeds to shake into life and assume a thousand eerily interlinking forms: a jellyfish; a grinning cookie monster; nameless beasties cursing at and reveling in their enigmatic fortunes. At a striking moment in her transmogrifications, she stands on her hands, crooks her knees with legs outstretched and by virtue of her posture, skirt and the trompe-l'oeil fullness of her glutei, which simulate an uplifted, maternal bosom, appears as a headless Minoan goddess. Only in the final pose does she stand upright and unveil her torso, turning the audience a nude back and a right profile of surpassing serenity, the fragile human center of countless mirages.

The second half of the evening was magic all the way. In his costume for "Solo from *The Eve of Samhain*" (1977), a pair of shaggy leggings, Robby Barnett, like a savage in a mask, became the thing he seemed: a living centaur. Pawing the ground, attacking the sky, circling entranced in the orb of a thong of bells, the violent poetry of his movement transported him from the empty stage to a palpable forest of myth. The imagery of the contemplative duet *Shizen* (1977) encompasses a vast visual field of smooth, rippling curvature, the sharp lines of a paper cutout, and monumental muscular plastique (nothing in it is more beautiful than the sight of Moses Pendleton's feet, anchored to the ground as in an Egyptian frieze). In Stratford, Pendleton and Chase unfolded its visions with supreme dignity and concentration. The program closed, as so many Pilobolus programs do, with *Untitled* (1975), which begins stilly with two willowy ladies of polite society in teasing conversation. Before its musing ending, with the ladies contentedly side by side in invisible rocking chairs, they traverse a landscape of marvel and hallucination. On massive legs, they rise gaily to doubled height; they sail aloft like annunciatory angels and give birth to naked men, full-grown. Like all the Pilobolus dances, early and new, *Untitled* depends unconditionally on physical strength and dexterity. Still, no gymnastic exercise has such pull on the imagination. From their inception, the Piloboli were something more than athletes. Now they are something else: they are artists.

Bibliographic postscript: the two subjects of this article are also the subjects of two recent books. Once past a fawning introduction by photographer Keith Money, *John Curry* (Knopf; $17.50) gives quite a candid account of the skater's development in his own words, which few, presumably, will bother to read. The pictures, which are the volume's obvious selling point and its raison d'être, flatter their subject but lack distinction. *Pilobolus* (Random House; $9.95) forgoes words almost altogether and thus avoids saying anything foolish. The photography by Tim Matson is at its best when it attempts to do no more than document; most of it aspires higher and falls short.

M. Anatole Gurewitsch

M. Anatole Gurewitsch is the music critic for *The New Leader* and performing arts editor for *Boston Review*.

Books Considered

The Culture of Narcissism: American Life In An Age of Diminishing Expectations by Christopher Lasch

(Norton; $12.95)

The criticism of culture has belonged to historians—though not exclusively to them—for a long time now, and it still makes many people uneasy. The view of the historian as a scientist with a body of data to uncover and a clear narrative line to flesh out with meticulous sobriety dies slowly. So too does the belief that someone with nasty things to say about contemporary institutions should have the decency to provide a detailed blueprint for change and improvement, and should offer his suggestions in the spirit of one who is thankful for our collective blessings and, at all costs, hopeful. In a time of shallow optimism, when the radical critique of social institutions has largely yielded once again to discussions of management, technique and short-term diplomacy, the critic with unpleasant things to tell us is likely to be told in turn that he is ungrateful and "negative," that he doesn't like people, and that he must be some sort of silly dreamer to insist that human beings were in several respects better off before the emergence of post-industrial capitalism. If the critic happens also to be a respected historian, he will hear that there are more useful

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things to do with his advantages than to complain and imagine alternate possibilities. What about the great stories to tell, the larger-than-life figures to celebrate or to portray with suitably self-approving candor? The historian who says no to the life of his own time may have a great tradition to look to for instruction, but he is not going to find much encouragement from contemporaries who spin more or less agreeably in the circumstances he evokes.

In his new book, Christopher Lasch argues that we live in a bad time, that we have wasted our resources and bankrupted our remaining institutions. Though he writes about American life, he has much to say about problems that have become endemic in a variety of western nations. He is concerned about schools, colleges, families, professional sports, penal and judicial codes, and a variety of other issues, but throughout he directs attention most emphatically to the emergence of a character type designated by Philip Rieff some years ago as Psychological Man. What had seemed to many of us a bewildering diversity of life patterns and cultural deformations are now persuasively explained as the products of an ethos for which the instant gratification of limitless desires is the only certain human value. As an historian, Lasch knows that no theory explains everything, and that individual behaviors often defy patterns to which most people conform. He does not pretend to describe everyone, but he has gone well beyond Rieff and other theorists in detailing the confusions and shifting identity images that disturb ordinary people. Where Rieff had largely limited himself—in *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1965) and *Fellow Teachers* (1972)—to an examination of intellectuals as a class in American society, Lasch is interested in the much larger population that consumes and is exploited by a great range of creature comforts. What Lasch loses in perfect organizational coherence he gains in diversity and immediacy of implication. Rieff's gifts as prophet-philosopher are nicely complemented by Lasch's eye for telling detail and his pointed distaste for the delusional thinking of current radicals. If Lasch is negative and angry, as hostile critics will say, he yet stakes out a position with the kind of clarity and consistency that will be hard to impugn. Liberals and social reformers especially will have to wonder, reading Lasch, how it is possible to see so much of the current situation without resorting to the meliorist and programmatic optimism that routinely informs the statements even of legislative and journalistic skeptics.

Already, in early reviews of Lasch's book, his position is subject to parody and mislabeling. We hear that his view of the future is "wholly pessimistic": "nobody" is taught anything in our schools; if we want to go forward, we have to go back and restore the past; and so on. In fact, Lasch is grim about our prospects, but he counsels not an encompassing pessimism so much as a willingness to see where we are. He advises not that we go back but that we consider the distant and more recent past as a repository of options we can neither evaluate nor dismiss unless we have come to terms with it. If, as he shows, very few of us any longer study the past, and are blithely unconcerned about the fact that our children are no longer encouraged to think historically—in the classroom or at home—how may we confidently live exclusively contemporaneous lives? Perhaps we insist on doing so because we despair of mastering or imagining anything that is not a part of our immediate experience, and invariably think it best to convert necessity to a dubious freedom. Whatever the case, Lasch has made himself the most punishing and persuasive social critic we have by insisting that more than common sense is required to determine what we should and should not be doing. To think of him as a man with or without a detailed blueprint—thus, as optimist or pessimist—is to miss the intention of his work entirely. Lasch thinks of the past not because he is consumed by an effete nostalgia but because he needs some standard by which to judge the results of present practice. He isn't concerned to choose one in place of the other, but to work out a comparative analysis in which no present option seems perfectly fixed or inevitable. To see that events might well have conspired to produce alternative dispensations is to understand how fateful certain choices can seem when people pretend they could never have chosen any other way.

If there is any part of Lasch's account that makes me more than usually uneasy, it is his adaptation of a psychoanalytic vocabulary to the purposes of the social critic and cultural historian. The psychoanalytic theory of culture, as elaborated by Freud and modified by very different critics like Rieff and Herbert Marcuse, has its genuine uses, but there has always been a danger that

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local insights and explanatory schemes would too readily be pressed into the service of broader perspectives on less precisely focused clinical objects. Rieff was careful not to speak of entire social classes in the language of the clinic, and limited himself increasingly to description, criticism and prediction in place of the kinds of genetic speculation to which Freud was committed. Lasch is more comfortable with genetic explanation, and his title, the culture of narcissism, is intended to have a specific and definitive thrust that Rieff avoids in his elaboration of the therapeutic as a character type. Thus, for Lasch, if "narcissism represents the psychological dimension" of the condition he describes, it is a dimension that may be said to have priority over other factors. For narcissism produces a variety of susceptibilities which, enacted as they largely are, issue in the attitudes and frustrations Lasch describes with admirable patience. Their origins will seem fully credible only to those who are more prepared than I am to think in terms of "archaic" identity images and "libidinal" investments and, most crucially, declining "superego." For it is Lasch's contention, following the leads of clinicians like Melanie Klein and Otto Kernberg, that the term "psychological man" is best understood as defining a specific character disorder whose proper clinical designation is narcissism. Though Lasch does not abuse the designation or any of its component terms, he clearly believes that it works. When he writes of "the fury with which the superego [sometimes] punishes the ego's failures" and of its deriving "most of its energy from aggressive drives in the id, unmixed with libido," I wonder whether the special vocabulary is necessary, plausible though the account may seem. I can say yes, no or probably to the statement that parents fail "to serve as models of disciplined self-restraint or to restrain the child," but I have little to say to the notion that therefore most children do or do not have a superego or that the contents of superego today are more "archaic" than they were two generations back.

Still, Lasch is committed to the psychoanalytic models only insofar as they permit him to do the work of cultural historian and social critic. Which is to say that he returns to these models only briefly and intermittently in the course of a work that has a great many areas to cover. And when the theory of narcissism is permitted to operate without specific clinical content—without the need to argue that individual pathologies constitute the key to every institutional disorder—the theory seems utterly persuasive. Here is Lasch at his best, ordering his insights into a unitary perception that is neither reductive nor a case of psychoanalytic special pleading:

> *In its pathological form, narcissism originates as a defense against feelings of helpless dependency in early life, which it tries to counter with 'blind optimism' and grandiose illusions of personal self-sufficiency. Since modern society prolongs the experience of dependence into adult life, it encourages milder forms of narcissism in people who might otherwise come to terms with the inescapable limits on their personal freedom and power—limits inherent in the human condition—by developing competence as workers and parents. But at the same time that our society makes it more and more difficult to find satisfaction in love and work, it surrounds the individual with manufactured fantasies of total gratification. The new paternalism preaches not self-denial but self-fulfillment. It sides with narcissistic impulses and discourages their modification by the pleasure of becoming self-reliant, even in a limited domain, which under favorable conditions accompanies maturity. While it encourages grandiose dreams of omnipotence, moreover, the new paternalism undermines more modest fantasies, erodes the capacity to suspend disbelief, and thus makes less and less accessible the harmless substitute gratifications . . . that help to mitigate the sense of powerlessness and the fear of dependence that otherwise express themselves in narcissistic traits.*

It may be objected that, in pointing an accusatory finger at "society," Lasch makes it all but impossible to fix blame in a precise and helpful way. But Lasch means to show in this work that no political or social institution stands apart from the others at this moment, and that before we try to fix blame we need to appreciate how it is possible to try to maximize human freedoms and satisfactions while at the same time making them meaningless. To preach "not self-denial but self-fulfillment" would seem to most of us a humane and charitable gesture; it is not easy to accept that "self-fulfillment" is an unlikely and frustrating goal for people who have not been taught respect for limits and for goal-determined activities. Similarly, to be asked to entertain "modest fantasies" in place of the more stirring developments promised by advanced liberationist ideologies is perhaps to feel that we should settle prematurely for second best, before we've had a chance to reach for better. Like Rieff, like Freud, Lasch is quite ready to speak in terms of competence, modesty and restraint, though many feel that they are promised greater things by a society built on the view that consumption is the key to every human pleasure.

Full appreciation of Lasch's book depends upon familiarity with the major texts in the tradition to which he belongs. When he speaks of social control he describes a process that has been evoked with stunning urgency in Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* and in less theoretically ambitious works like Philip Slater's *The Pursuit of Loneliness*. Not that Lasch wishes to follow these forebears in an explicit way or to support their conclusions. He does, though, expect that his reader will have some basis from which to respond to his arguments even when he cannot take the space to work out a given point in detail. This expectation will seem unreasonable to those who believe that Lasch's responsibility is to provide practical suggestions and to avoid demoralizing a constituency already anxious and confused. But Lasch writes in a tradition for which criticism is itself a life-enhancing act. The adversary relation between intellectuals and others seems to him the only proper relation under present conditions, and he is loath to pretend there are less abrasive relations that will do.

In fact, it is precisely the "softening" or "eliminating" of the adversary relation in our culture that he generally holds responsible for many of our problems. Marcuse may have gone too far in his critique of liberal tolerance as the central mode of social control in the West, but one hears him all the same in Lasch's less categorical denunciations. "Society no longer expects authorities to articulate a clearly reasoned, elaborately justified code of law and morality," he argues; "nor does it expect the young to internalize the moral standards of the community. It demands only conformity to the conventions of everyday intercourse, sanctioned by psychiatric definitions of normal behavior." And, we might add, by convention, according to which each is entitled to act out as expressively as he likes provided only

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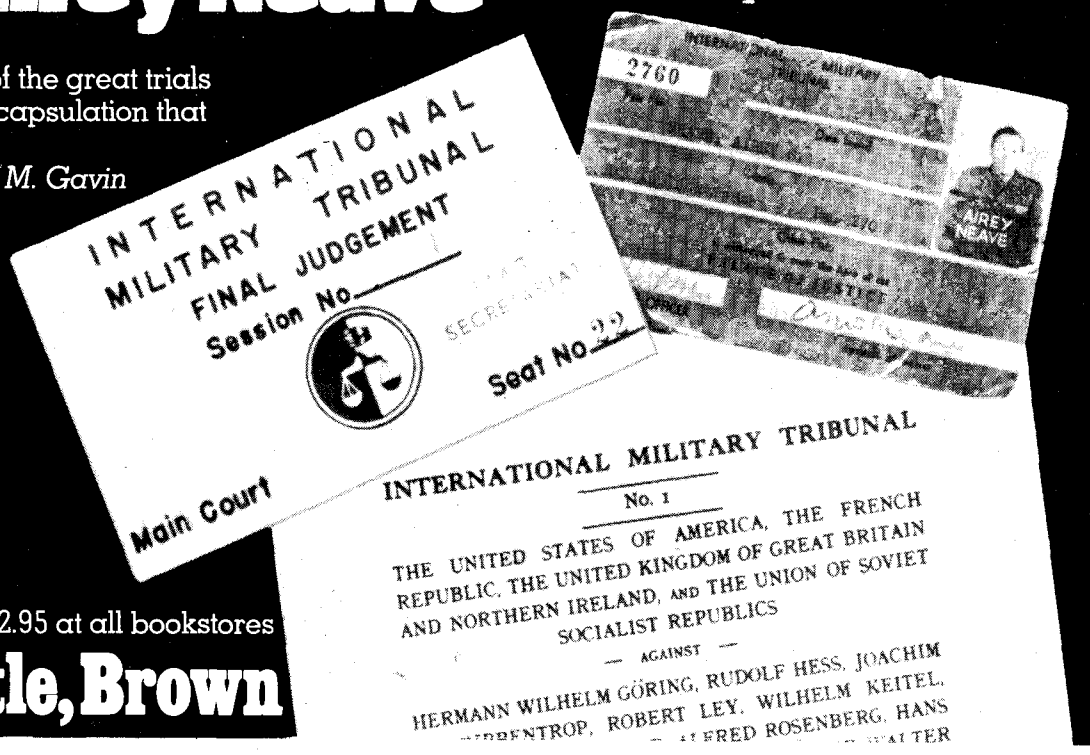
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that nothing fundamentally troubling is raised to a level of consciousness that will provoke open conflict. People may be nominally free to say or to think what they like, but few are likely to go against the grain in a serious way when nothing is taken seriously. When the only threat that matters is a threat to one's own immediate satisfactions, what wide-ranging argument is likely to seem important? People may quarrel over this item or that, but all are conditioned to feel that they are likely to get whatever they think they want if only they can come up with an effective way to ask for it.

Lasch's study raises the central questions so forthrightly that it ought to touch off important debates in the academy and in our better journals of opinion. But one thought Philip Rieff's *Fellow Teachers* would have had that effect, and it was largely ignored when it appeared five years ago. Perhaps it will be useful to cite a half-dozen passages in Lasch's book which may serve to focus discussion.

Having trivialized the past by equating it with outmoded styles of consumption, discarded fashions and attitudes, people today resent anyone who draws on the past in serious discussions of contemporary conditions or attempts to use the past as a standard by which to judge the present.

Arising out of a pervasive dissatisfaction with the quality of personal relations, [the consciousness movement] advises people not to make too large an investment in love and friendship, to avoid excessive dependence on others, and to live for the moment—the very conditions that created the crisis of personal relations in the first place.

The measurement of sexual 'performance,' the insistence that sexual satisfaction depends on proper 'technique,' and the widespread belief that it can be 'achieved' only after coordinated effort, practice, and study all testify to the invasion of play by the rhetoric of achievement.

[Modern culture] emancipates women and children from patriarchal authority, however, only to subject them to the new paternalism of the advertising industry, the industrial corporation, and the state.

Incapable of identification, in the first instance with parents and other authority figures [the narcissist] is therefore incapable of hero worship or of the suspension of disbelief that makes it possible to enter imaginatively into the lives of others while acknowledging their independent existence.

In the name of egalitarianism [progressives] preserve the most insidious form of elitism, which in one guise or another holds the masses incapable of intellectual exertion.

The whole problem of American education comes down to this: in American society, almost everyone identifies intellectual excellence with elitism.

Robert Boyers

Robert Boyers is editor of the quarterly *Salmagundi* and professor of English at Skidmore. He is author of recent books on Lionel Trilling and F.R. Leavis (University of Missouri Press).

The American Presidency by Richard M. Pious

(Basic Books; $16)

Although they invented the American presidency the Founding Fathers were of two minds about it from the start. Some thought the office so powerful that an ambitious incumbent might one day destroy the liberties of the people. Others thought it so inherently weak that presidents would be unable to protect the Constitution from corrupt and designing factions. Down the years these two schools of thought have taken turns replacing each other. Strong presidents have aroused fears of elective despotism; weak presidents, fears of dangerously ineffectual government. In this ambitious and thoughtful book, Richard M. Pious, a political scientist at Barnard College, has attempted to meld the two schools into one. The American presidency, according to Pious, is simultaneously too strong and too weak—like Richard Nixon, whose presidential ghost haunts the pages of this book.

The author's argument rests on an important distinction he makes between two kinds of presidential power. The first is political power, the ability of presidents to govern the country by the arts of persuasion: to convince the citizenry to support, Congress to enact, and the Executive Branch to carry out his public policies. The second sort of power, Pious rightly calls "prerogative" power, the power which presidents possess by virtue of the constitutional authority vested in their office: for example, the bristling array of prerogatives which presidents now claim as commanders-in-chief of the nation's armed forces. If political power is the ability to persuade, prerogative power is the president's authority to command. It is a classical political distinction and still an eminently useful one.

Since the Constitution is quite ambiguous about the prerogatives of the presidency, most of the prerogatives that modern presidents enjoy were won for the office by presidents themselves. Washington claimed the authority—nowhere enumerated in the Constitution—to negotiate a foreign treaty unilaterally. Upheld by the nation, that claim is now an acknowledged prerogative of the White House. Indeed, as Pious makes clear, the prerogatives of modern presidents in foreign affairs, combined with their prerogatives as commanders-in-chief, have given the modern presidency truly awesome command over the whole imperious domain of "national security." The author's fine chapter on the war-making prerogatives of the modern White House and the futile congressional efforts to curtail them is cool, dispassionate and hair-raising.

To that extent, then, Pious agrees with recent critics of the "imperial presidency." So far, but no further. According to Pious the political, or persuasive, powers of the presidency are inherently feeble. Presidents "cannot obtain an electoral mandate, do not gain control of party machinery, and cannot obtain expertise from the advisory systems [i.e., the career bureaucrats in the Executive Branch] that would permit them to lead Congress and the nation by force of argument." With rare exceptions, the people do not elect presidents to carry out specific policies since election campaigns, as Pious points out, do not clarify issues and policies. Presidents do not even enjoy the general support of electoral majorities since half the electorate does not even bother to vote. Elections, therefore, do not provide presidents with the power that

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comes from clear popular support for their policies. Nor does the mere fact of incumbency enable a president, merely because he is president, to mobilize popular support for his policies. The "bully pulpit," in Pious's view, has been vastly overrated by journalists and scholars. Pious is certainly right. Ask Johnson or Nixon about the alleged powers of the "bully pulpit."

"Weak" as popular leaders, presidents are also weak as party leaders. They cannot compel their party's magnates in Congress to follow their lead since the magnates are not beholden to presidents for their power. They are often beholden to state and local party leaders, but, as Pious rightly notes, "the president does not control the state parties." They are "autonomous" wielders of party power largely beyond the reach of the presidency. Unable to gain strong popular support, unable to control their party's leaders, presidents are inherently weak as legislative leaders. When Congress is obdurate, when it decides to decimate his legislative programs, there is precious little an American president can do about it.

With obvious historical exceptions, these are valid and important generalizations about the limited political power inherent in the presidency. They lay to rest a lot of groundless fears about the "imperial presidency" and its presumed ability to dominate the media and men's minds. Without the support of leading politicians and the press, presidents *cannot* alter public opinion on a major issue by delivering a few televised speeches from the Oval Office. Presidents *cannot*, merely by virtue of incumbency, force Congress to enact their legislative proposals. But why does Pious call these limitations signs of "weakness"? They ought to be grounds for rejoicing. If the American people were so servile and the presidency so sacrosanct (as a lot of people were saying just a few years ago) that presidents could alter public opinion with a speech, this republic would be dead on the spot, for presidents would be elective despots. If presidents could, merely by virtue of incumbency, successfully push their bills through Congress, then Congress would cease to be, save in name, the independent legislative branch of a free government. It would resemble the Roman Senate under Caesar Augustus, a mere auxiliary of the executive power.

Professor Pious is not, however, a sly propagandist for presidential despotism—far from it. What he is saying, in effect, is that the American government is trapped in an ominous dilemma. The presidency's limited political power protects us from elective despotism but it entails grave dangers nonetheless. The principle underlying these dangers, according to Pious, is that presidents, finding themselves too "weak" to persuade Congress or the people to support their policies, will often try to carry out those policies unilaterally, by claiming the official prerogative of doing what they, but too few others, want done. President Nixon was too "weak" to persuade Congress or the people to support the bombing of Cambodia so he did it in secret as commander-in-chief. Weak in the political sphere, he became too strong in the prerogative sphere.

What makes the danger endemic, according to Pious, is that "the American people want presidents to solve problems. But the party system, the legislature and the subgovernments [of the Executive Branch] each deny the White House the political power" to solve those problems. Since presidents want to achieve something, they will seize upon "real or manufactured crises" to "institute forms of prerogative government." This formulation is a little too coy. What Pious is referring to, it seems to me, is foreign affairs. I say this, first, because no president, however hamstrung by Congress, has ever "manufactured" a *domestic* crisis that enabled him to institute "prerogative government." Nothing short of inciting insurrection would suffice; calling the

TOWN CENTER IN DECEMBER

They stand as though standing's what they came for.
Some deep conviction keeps them shivering
In their boots, ungloved hands pocketed, elbows
Clenched to the ribs, the whole effect much like
A bellows; which huffs and puffs out cold plumes
Of whitened breath, the little of it used
For speech doled out unwillingly. Words find
Their feet here only in a systole-
Diastole that telegraphs remorse and fear,
Cash sums galvanic to the homemade iamb:
I'm eighty dollars overspent so far;
I've really got to try and hold it down.
But who gets past the ordered zeal that laid
This trap of civic grids, where pigeons, urban
If not yet tame, beetle like us across
A green decked out with colored lights, thousands,
(To help us like the weight of extra bags
And run through the midday hours pushing in
And out of revolving doors, steal after steal,
Held up by the bargains there)? We go, we stop,
We look up at gunmetal skies and hope
To see a sign—if only handed down
From the billboard's impassive, ad hoc person.
The puzzle in his face is reassuring;
He seems to know that we've been treading water
And no doubt wants to help. . . . You opposite,
Chock-a-block ranks, wait; and stare us down.
(Familiar inmates of so many lines,
We gathered here to be alone, did we?)
The bus glides up and stops; gusts, lurches,
Erasing all your glasses, coats and notions
As broadcast chimes begin to strike the time.
They run ahead of you all the way home,
A place that's never very far from here,
Nor from a bar less thirst than doggedness
Will draw some unresigned ones to around ten.
What brighter festivities would you ask for?
Let lights light up, glow on glow with the glasses
Night after night of whiskey, beer and gin!
Until the New Year drops you off again,
The post you think of as your own, where you
Will stand and wait, cold and numb with waiting.

Alfred Corn

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energy shortage a "crisis" gave Carter no prerogative powers. Moreover, it is only in foreign affairs that presidents enjoy vast prerogative powers. The chief danger which Pious hints at seems to be this: American presidents, finding themselves too weak politically to solve domestic problems and fearful of disappointing the citizenry, will feel compelled to concentrate on foreign affairs where they can virtually govern alone. The dangers of using foreign affairs to obscure domestic paralysis are obvious enough. It means an incoherent, hyperactive foreign policy punctuated by alarms, excursions and "manufactured crises," a hideous waste of the country's political, moral and material resources. It is that danger which entitles Professor Pious to describe as "weaknesses" the limited power of presidents to persuade and to legislate.

Yet history does not bear out such a thesis. It is not "weak" presidents, striving vainly to "solve problems," who have turned strenuously to foreign affairs. In almost every important case in this century, that has been done by "strong" presidents who *enjoyed* electoral mandates, who *had* control of their party and who *were* successful as legislative leaders.

Empowered by a national movement for progressive reform, Woodrow Wilson persuaded a Democratic Congress to pass legislation touching on the most basic problems of the age: the private power of the trusts and the monopoly control of capital enjoyed by a few New York banks. While his bills were moving through Congress Wilson announced a new kind of foreign policy for America, an active policy of "service to mankind." Thirteen months after taking office, shrouded in the glory of his legislative successes, Wilson invaded Mexico. Some months later he announced that there were no further domestic problems to solve and proceeded to apply his prerogative powers to inveigling America into the European war.

On Inauguration Day, 1937, Franklin Roosevelt, too, enjoyed an elective mandate for reform—to continue his New Deal programs, to throttle "economic royalists," to "struggle against private monopoly," and to succor the "ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." With a long record of legislative success behind him, Roosevelt, however, did not even try to redeem his pledges or execute his mandate. Instead he submitted to Congress a dubious bill to enlarge the Supreme Court, which he presented in the clumsiest manner and defended with the flimsiest arguments. When the dust of that legislative battle settled some months later, Roosevelt turned at once to foreign affairs and called upon Americans to "quarantine" aggressors. In his 1938 message to Congress, the dominant theme was national defense.

Lyndon Johnson, too, enjoyed an electoral mandate—to wage a "war on poverty." He, too, like Wilson and Roosevelt, was markedly successful in promoting legislation. Soon after his inauguration, however, he began bombing North Vietnam.

In short, it was precisely the presidents who wielded considerable political power, who were eminently capable of pushing through further legislation, who, instead of doing so, turned abruptly to foreign affairs and war. It was not domestic political impotence which propelled them but rather a determination to divert their power (and popular expectations) outside the domestic sphere. It was not a case of Congress and the parties frustrating a president, but presidents, Congress and the parties combining to frustrate the American people. Professor Pious's thesis about the dangers inherent in the limited political powers of the presidency is not only unproved, it is downright misleading. It mars a book which is, in the main, a first-rate account of the world's most complicated political office.

Walter Karp

Walter Karp's latest book, *The Politics of War*, will be published this spring by Harper & Row.

Something to Guard: The Stormy Life of the National Guardian, 1948-1967 by Cedric Belfrage and James Aronson

(Columbia University Press; $19.95)

It took no small amount of courage, and often a great deal of personal sacrifice, to oppose the Cold War consensus during the bleak decade of the 1950s. And as editors of the *National Guardian* (NG), Cedric Belfrage and James Aronson, working with the late John T. McManus, all paid a steep price for their commitment. Belfrage suffered the most. After invoking the Fifth Amendment before both HUAC and the McCarthy committee, Belfrage—one day after his appearance before the latter—was arrested and detained on Ellis Island. A lower court eventually released him on bail. But, as a British subject, his position was precarious. He was rearrested one year later, and finally deported to his native land.

When *New York Post* editor James Wechsler appeared before the McCarthy committee, he showed his good faith as an anti-Communist by offering some 59 names of those he knew to be Communists when he was a YCL member in the 1930s. *The New York Times* and the American Society of Newspaper Editors sprung to his defense, correctly observing that McCarthy's interrogation was an attack on basic freedom of the press—since Wechsler was an unabashed critic of McCarthy. Belfrage, in contrast, had few defenders, I.F. Stone being a notable exception. The attack on Belfrage, he wrote, was an attempt to intimidate and silence dissenters from the official Cold War line.

The general outlines of Belfrage's travail were already discussed in James Aronson's earlier work *The Press and the Cold War* (1970), and little new information is found in this volume. Moreover, the general capitulation of Cold War liberals to postwar repression has been thoroughly treated in recent books by Mary McAuliffe and David Caute.

A book which gives us the personal reminiscences of the NG's two main editors, however, should offer us more than another occasion to flay the sins of the NG's ideological opponents. It could have been an opportunity to reassess the politics of their attempt to create a broad-based radical newspaper. It could have offered, as they write, a chance "to learn from the past to understand the present to set guideposts for the future." By these terms, the book they

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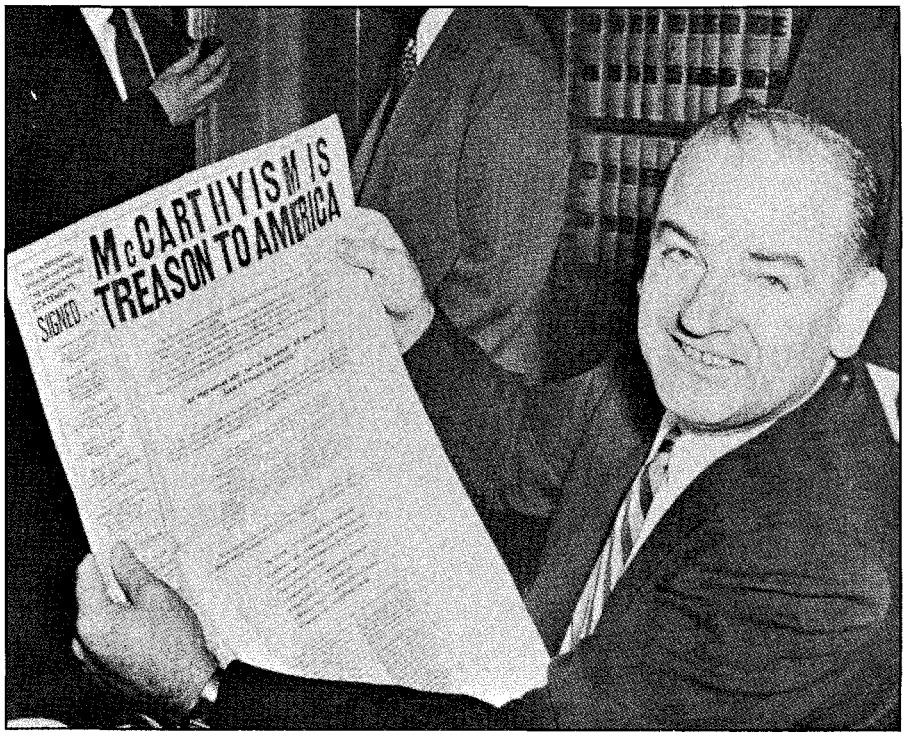
have given us is a failure. Instead of a critical look back, the authors present an apologia for their own past positions.

Two themes dominate their discussion—the relationship of their paper to the American Communist party, and their attitude toward the Soviet Union and the "socialist camp," as the supposedly united Russian-Chinese-Eastern European bloc was then dubbed.



Senator Joseph McCarthy enjoyed publicity—any publicity. International News photo from *Something to Guard.*

From the start the NG's editors, all privately Marxists and socialists, decided that their new paper would be called "progressive" rather than socialist. "We decided against commitment to socialism," Belfrage explains, "for we hoped to win a public beyond the 'converted,' 'starting where they are' and leading them by subversively rational steps to where we were." Socialism, in other words, was to remain a privately held faith. It would develop and take root among their readership without the urging of a socialist press or the political pressure of a socialist movement.

Unlike the Communists, who favored working within the Democratic party (while also hiding their own ideological identity and position), the NG editors advocated a pristine-pure third party electoral effort, regardless of whether they had a movement which could sustain such an endeavor. Hence they faced the formidable opposition of the Communist party. Belfrage gives us new evidence of how the CP waged a private war against his "progressive" newsweekly. CP staff members engaged in gossip that Belfrage was a British agent out to subvert the progressive movement, a bit of politically motivated paranoia reminiscent of Sidney Hook's recent claim that Belfrage was "a member of the British Intelligence Service who had been recruited by the Soviet Secret Police operating in the US. . . . a double-agent with basic loyalty to the Kremlin." CP leaders urged prospective angels to put their money into other ventures; they engaged in formal organized attempts to wrest control of the paper from its editors. These all failed, and Belfrage comments that "the majority of CP leaders [never] understood how vital it was for them to have the support of a non-Communist radical publication like ours."

Belfrage seems intent on showing them they were wrong. He offers an excerpt from an early NG editorial, which stated that "any honest reading of history compels the recognition that on the major issues of the past 20 years the Communist party has been right more often than it has been wrong," a statement which makes one shudder—and seriously doubt Aronson's and Belfrage's understanding of 20th-century American radicalism.

Both NG editors viewed the CP as "the core of the radical movement," a position which belies their claim to have been a non-Communist radical publication. It would be more accurate to describe their paper and its editors as masochistic fellow-travelers, since their kowtowing to the CP never won them party support. Despite all the CP's secret maneuvers against them, the NG's editors insisted they had "no enemies on the left," except, of course, "democratic socialists," a group Aronson unfairly condemns as composed entirely of Cold Warriors. He does not substantiate this judgment, but it is obviously based on the fact that, unlike the NG's editors, these unnamed socialists held no illusions about Stalinism.

The Communists, they write, "wanted to push us into the background or take us over." As good comrades, however, Belfrage and Aronson agreed never to condemn or even publicize the CP's pernicious activity. They accepted the fallacious view of the CP itself—that to criticize the party was to engage in red-baiting: a theory that put the CP beyond criticism, and worked to alienate actual non-Communist radicals whose opposition to the Cold War did not lead them to suspend their critical faculties.

Using their ammunition exclusively against "the real enemy," the US government, the NG's editors viewed the Soviet Union as the "hope of mankind." Hence they decided to withhold whatever criticisms of Stalin's Russia they may have harbored privately. In so doing, they made a tragic error. If America's policymakers, to cite Daniel Yergin's well chosen words in *Shattered Peace*, insisted incorrectly that "domestic Soviet totalitarianism inevitably meant a totalitarian foreign policy . . . motivated primarily by ideology and geared to unlimited expansion," rather than confrontation with a "cruel, clumsy, bureaucratized fear-ridden despotism, preoccupied with reconstructing a vast war-torn land," the NG's editors made a judgment that was a mirror image of the establishment's misreading of Soviet intentions.

They wrote as if opposition to expansion of the American Empire demanded defense of Stalin's internal social order, and a cover-up of the ugly reality, that the Soviet Union, in Leopold Trepper's phrase, was a revolution that had "degenerated into a system of terror and horror"; a society strewn with the bodies of workers and Communists, that "did not . . . could not lead to socialism."

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One shocking episode discussed by Belfrage reveals the inanities of their fellow-traveling—strikingly so since Belfrage writes as if they had taken the correct stand. At the time of the Slansky trials in Czechoslovakia, Left-Labour MP Koni Zilliacus, who was also their British reporter, was charged with being an "imperialist-Titoist-Zionist" agent, a charge which Belfrage admits the NG's editors knew was preposterous. While Zilliacus favored "calling the shots on Soviet misdeeds as the best defense of socialism," Belfrage thought the Prague trials were a "fair prosecution," itself an amazing admission. But because the Czech Stalinists had linked his friend Zilliacus to the purported conspiracy, Belfrage acknowledges that "we could no longer delude ourselves that socialism and frame-ups were a contradiction in terms."

But evidently their readers were to remain deluded. The NG was to take a different course from the one they did take when they suspected the American government of engineering frame-ups. Belfrage's argument is so incredible it must be quoted in full:

> *The essence of our position was that 'the great hope of mankind' was still in the womb of the Soviets who . . . were critically vulnerable to America's atomic arsenal. As long as this was so, how could we even appear to join the hue-and-cry led by the West's vilest people and most shameless liars? In any case, whatever was wrong in the socialist world, we knew no way in which it could be put right by foreigners: for if on the record they were enemies of the Soviet Union, Moscow could turn an attack by them into a justification; and if on the record they had been friends, they promptly became enemies in Soviet eyes. The tremendous East-West tension left no room in between.*

Always welcoming Soviet-bloc protest against capitalist injustice as an example of international solidarity, Belfrage argued that Stalin was right: any criticism of Soviet society automatically made one an enemy of socialism. So while a radical intellectual like Dwight MacDonald opted to "choose the West," while still thinking and acting as an American radical, the NG's editors opted to choose the East. That choice dictated silence about the crimes committed by their chosen side in the Cold War.

Thinking that they were acting on behalf of "the ultimate good of world socialism,"—never pausing to question whether it was really socialism they were defending—Belfrage wrote Zilliacus in 1952 that they felt "compelled to suppress a moral conviction because we think we'd do more harm to what we most deeply believe in by expressing it." While Belfrage privately noted he would "be sorry if at least somebody of your stature hadn't taken your position," he explained that the NG could not—"by taking it we would separate ourselves from the movement in this country." It never occurred to Belfrage that perhaps the perpetual defense of Stalinism helped destroy the possibility of a genuine socialist movement in America.

The authors return to this issue repeatedly. The "long record of lying about the Soviet Union" by Western Kremlinologists, they explain, "suggested that whatever they said, the opposite was probably true." A flip sentence, but it obscures the reality that the "Kremlinologists" were on the whole more accurate than they were.

Why did they accept Soviet positions uncritically and present overzealous portrayals of life in Stalin's Russia? Belfrage offers various explanations. He first shifts the blame to the CP leadership, ignoring that their own rationales helped the CP to get away with constant distortions. He then affirms that the NG's obligation was "to impress upon readers the right of the Soviet Union to exist," as if honest portrayals of Soviet reality implied the opposite. Soviet foreign policy, he adds, was understandably defensive; criticism of Russia by democratic socialists gave "aid and comfort to American policy." Moreover, "to say that the facts about the ugly aspects of the Stalin era were not available may sound like a subterfuge, but it is to a large extent a fair statement." No doubt the proverbial "good" German could have said the same about the death camps.

If he is not being dishonest, Belfrage is only displaying his abysmal ignorance. Solzhenitsyn offered new data about the Gulag, but the essential facts were clear for those who did not wear blinders by the mid and late 1930s. One could have found them in Anton Ciliga's account of his imprisonment, in the reports of Victor Serge, in the devastating dissections of the Moscow purge trials by the young left Communist Sidney Hook, in Max Eastman's *Stalin's Russia: The Crisis in Socialism,* and, of course, in Trotsky's seminal work, *The Revolution Betrayed.*

Belfrage, as he already made clear, chose to ignore these works. By definition, they were those written by enemies of socialism. To Belfrage and Aronson, the threat of Western intervention against the Soviets dictated defense of Stalinism. Since Russia was vulnerable, they write, "genuine socialists spontaneously and naturally defended it." They assume that Stalin's terror was in defense, ignoring recent scholarship which has shown that Stalin's brutality had nothing to do with justifiable security needs. (Indeed, the purge of Tukhachevsky and the leading generals harmed the actual Soviet defense potential on the very eve of World War II.) Stalinism did have to do with the dictator's desire to close off alternatives to his path of development, such as Bukharin's more humane version of Bolshevism. But these issues are beyond the comprehension of Belfrage and Aronson. They simply prefer, as they put it in a 1966 staff memo, to be "partisan to those who err in the fight for socialism." Thus the same NG editors who smirked at American liberals for referring to Vietnam as an aberration, view the Gulag simply as one of Stalin's errors.

Always bending over backward to appease the CP, they offer an account filled with numerous omissions and half-truths. They discuss the end of George Seldes's muckraking newsletter *In Fact,* which they say expired from collapsing circulation in 1950 because of its anti-capitalism and Seldes's persecution by McCarthyites. Readers would not know that because Seldes was critical of all parties in the Korean War, and because he supported Tito's independence from Moscow, his newsletter was removed from "progressive" bookstores, and CP members canceled their subscriptions in droves. "American Communists began a boycott of *In Fact,*" Seldes has recently stated, "and eventually helped put it out of business."

I.F. Stone, who started his own radical weekly in the same decade, was, as the authors put it, the only leftist journalist who "made an economic success of confronting the inquisitors." Stone defended Belfrage, and even advertised his own publication in the NG. But he did not contribute to it, since he objected "to some of our politics." Why was Stone able to build up his circulation and audience, while the NG's never grew? The authors raise this question but fail to answer it; they also fail to give us a hint of their differences with Stone.

Stone's reputation grew precisely as theirs floundered. Like the NG editors, Stone was part of the Popular Front Left. Unlike other democratic socialists,

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he supported Henry Wallace's presidential bid and backed the Progressive party. But he chided the PP for going along with Wallace's concept of "progressive capitalism." True social controls, he wrote, would never be forthcoming until "some movement and some leader in America have the courage and the vision to speak in socialist terms, to say the horrid word 'socialism' over and over again, until the fears which coagulate about it are overcome." His admonition for "a strong infusion of socialism into the anemic veins of the Progressives" could very well have been addressed to the NG editors.

Moreover, Stone was never reluctant to criticize the Communist party, and he understood that the Communists were "most of the time . . . not radical at all." He asked for an "honest airing" of the CP's role in the Progressive party, and he wrote that the CP's "stultifications and idiocies . . . splits and heresy hunts" made them so "ludicrous a spectacle half the time." Stone was a fierce opponent of the Cold War, but that did not stop him from voicing truths that Belfrage and Aronson could never see.

The *National Guardian* finally collapsed under the impact of the 1960s New Left assault on the paper. Aronson and Belfrage were receptive to the radical youth, yet hesitant about their calls for "instant revolution through massive demonstration and confrontation, not only spurning our experiences and lessons but dismissing Marxism altogether." Leaving aside that spurning the NG's brand of Marxism was desirable, they were probably correct to believe that transformation of their paper into an organ of the New Left would spell its end. Rejecting the "romantic rhetoric of revolution" that led the new radicals into confrontation politics, the NG editors held out a poor alternative—continuance of their own stodgy neo-Stalinism. They chided New Left staff members for having no organization and "no program socialist or otherwise." But neither did they.

Eventually in 1967 the New Left staff took the paper over. Shortly thereafter its new editors split into different factions, leaving born-again Marxist-Maoists in editorial control of the paper which now bears the name *Guardian*, and which announces in its 30th anniversary number that its task is "to advance the cause of building a new communist party capable of leading the masses to victory over capitalism." Its editors see as their main job the fighting of "dogmatism, revisionism and Trotskyism," issues of grave concern to millions of Americans.

Aronson and Belfrage end with a plea to see the establishment of a "genuinely radical press to stir the nation's conscience. So it is surprising to find that they do not mention the only real such endeavor, the weekly socialist paper *In These Times*. But unlike the old *National Guardian*, ITT is unashamedly socialist, and it has dispensed with the NG's variety of crude Old Left fellow-traveling. Its sponsors read like a Who's Who of the democratic and new Marxist left, and it has run several long pieces about the European socialist revival that would have been anathema to both Belfrage and Aronson.

For a new radical press to succeed, the authors conclude, it will be "the result of hard work by a solid, organized movement with a common basic ideal." Their own experience, however, has only negative lessons to teach us about how to create such a movement: their memoir shows us the foibles and follies of Old Left fellow-traveling. That is not the lesson Belfrage and Aronson hoped readers would learn from their book, but it is the most striking one.

Ronald Radosh

Ronald Radosh, historian and author, writes the column "What's LEFT To Read?" which appears bi-monthly in *The Newsletter of the Democratic Left.*

Great Days
by Donald Barthelme

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $9.95)

In Donald Barthelme's fourth collection of short stories a narrator complains, "It is difficult to keep the public interested. The public demands new wonders piled on new wonders. Often we don't know where our next marvel is coming from. The supply of strange ideas is not endless." *Great Days* is Barthelme's sixth collection, his 10th book. If not endless, his supply of ideas has often seemed so. His readers have been spectators at a kind of fictional circus: Comanche attacks, philosophical discussions with illustrations, a slightly irregular fire engine, updated fables, Robert Kennedy saved from drowning, stories composed of pictures or of one sentence, stories about story-telling. His fiction is sophisticated, bookish, witty, occasionally sentimental, and almost always in fragments—even his two short novels are divided into extremely brief chapters. He is a modern metaphysician, yoking together reality and fantasy, grand visions and banal objects on a kitchen table. Many of his stories are merely *jeux d'esprit* (spoofs, parodies, interesting ideas played out) but his best capture the quality of contemporary urban life so well that any consideration of American fiction in the past two decades must touch upon them.

Barthelme's art is not static. He is an explorer of prose forms. He stays abreast of literary developments in America and elsewhere and his fiction constantly changes to reflect slight changes in the way we experience our lives. *Great Days* continues where *Amateurs*, the previous collection, left off; the stories are increasingly clipped, less visual, more difficult. The range of pleasure available upon a first reading has grown even narrower.

As usual, about half of these new stories are baubles, one-notion entertainments: an imaginary encounter between Cortes and Montezuma, an updated version of Mozart's "Abduction from the Seraglio," a tale about the death of Edward Lear, an *objet trouvé*, found in *Godey's Lady's Book* (1850) under the byline of Hickory Broom and minimally edited by Barthelme. These stories are crankier, less funny than earlier *jeux d'esprit*. "The King of Jazz," in which Hokie Mokie is challenged for his new crown by Hideo Yamaguchi, is a frustrating waste of time. "Concerning the Bodyguard," a series of questions about the life of an anonymous bodyguard, either trivializes an important point (about the significance of a single life amidst multitudes of others) or makes no point at all. The important stories here, the first three and the last

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three, are important technically. All six are in the form of conversations. Interviews and catechisms have appeared before in Barthelme's work, but these new pieces are different, mysterious. We are neither certain that there are only two speakers nor that all of the words are spoken (dashes are used instead of quotation marks, a Joycean technique employed by several contemporary writers).

—Clementine is thought to be one of the great rebel leaders of the half century. Her hat has four cockades.

—I loved her for a while. Then, it stopped.

—Rebel T-shirts, camouflaged as ordinary T-shirts by an intense whiteness no eye can pierce, are worn everywhere.

—I don't know why it stopped, it just stopped. That's happened several times. Is something wrong with me?

—Closely supervised voting in the other cantons produced results clearly favorable to neither faction, but rather a sort of generalized approbation which could be appropriated by anyone who had need of it.

—A greater concentration on one person than you normally find. Then, zip.

The voices in these stories discourse on a variety of topics; non-specific references (her, it, that) allow the topics to be linked together grammatically, a kind of layering of meanings. The stories are open to all suggestions, and can stop on a dime and head in any direction. Even in "On the Steps of the Conservatory" and "The Leap," which read more like ordinary dialogues, the voices make numerous allusions and go off on all sorts of tangents.

It seems natural for Barthelme to be experimenting increasingly with aural forms. His ear for speech is impeccable. Repartee is amenable to his obsessive frivolity with language. His characters are usually cut-outs; this form allows him virtually to dispense with characterization. But most important is the freedom it permits from the strictures of the traditional short story form. Although opening and closing sequences are not haphazard, in these stories beginnings, middles and endings don't really exist. And plot, since nothing happens, is more a proliferation and blossoming than a procession of events.

Barthelme's fiction, much of which has already appeared in standard American anthologies, has always demanded patience. The trouble with *Great Days* is that it isn't as enjoyable to read as his earlier work. His fans may find in his technical innovations justification for the less rewarding, or at least less immediately rewarding, fiction; readers less smitten with him may have begun to give up on his work a while ago. "We feel only 25 percent of what we ought to feel, according to recent findings," a voice in the opening story claims. This might be a gloss on *Great Days*: it celebrates life less and less. One must hesitate to judge prematurely the progress of a writer as good as Barthelme, but one wonders about a growth that carries a writer away from the pains and elations of the heart toward fiction that is increasingly thin, enigmatic and obscure.

Marc Granetz

Marc Granetz is the Harvard Scholar at Cambridge University, England.

Hanta Yo
by Ruth Beebe Hill

(Doubleday; $14.95)

Hanta Yo is not a book to read quickly and forget. To make your way through this remarkable historical narrative you need the kind of patience, wonder and respect that Ruth Beebe Hill brought to its construction. As the author says in her introduction, *Hanta Yo* requests "a willingness to enter the Dakotah world uncritically, without vanity. In this way the story will return the reader to the spiritual source not only of the American Indian but of America itself." That's a large claim with which to start off an 800-page saga, but she meets it almost without faltering.

Hanta Yo is the superbly crafted product of 25 years devoted to a painstakingly thorough investigation of western American Indian tribes. In collaboration with Chunksa Yuha, a descendant of the Sioux, and tutored from childhood in the archaic Siouan dialects, customs and songs, Hill translated the original draft of the book into the early form of the Dakotah/Lakotah tongue and then back again into English in order to be faithful to the Indian idiom; the result is a narrative whose language is surprisingly direct, vital and evocative.

The story is a fictional elaboration upon the chronological record kept on a tanned hide by a member of the Mahto band of the Teton Sioux. Hill follows the tribe from 1794 to 1835 in its seasonal moves across the plains. She unfolds in a leisurely way the tale of two families, and in particular, the legendary friendship between Ahbleza and Tonweya, the son of a warrior-leader and the son of a hunter. The characters are developed with sure, subtle strokes and Hill writes convincingly of the struggles between the generations over maintaining old traditions or encouraging new ways. Ahbleza, reflective and strong-willed, won't accept unquestioningly the rituals handed down to him, and he cannot comprehend his father's single-minded pursuit of the warrior ideal. He must discover, through his vision-quest with Tonweya and his own solitary participation in the most rigorous of the tribe's purification ceremonies, the abiding meaning to his people, rather than the superficial symbolism, of *śkan*, or spiritual vitality—their life force.

Possessing an artist's eye for detail, Hill delicately depicts the centrality of gesture, symbolism and ritual in this culture: the crossed sticks outside a tipi indicate the family's desire for privacy; male friends touch legs on horseback as a sign of affection and solidarity; the pipe-smoking ceremony connotes a sharing of familial or tribal triumphs, tragedies or simple well-being; a husband combs his wife's hair and paints a stripe down her scalp as an expression of tenderness and pride. Implicitly, the unassuming dignity of the Dakotah begins to emerge.

In writing a book of this sort, one risks lapsing into a romantic vision of the displaced culture. And on beginning *Hanta Yo*, I feared that it would attempt to prod the white guilt-ridden conscience by illustrating the primal beauty of a people annihilated by the ancestors of many of us. To a large extent Hill avoids this trap. To be sure, her white traders are presented as coarse, exploitative antagonists, mindless oafs in comparison to the lithe, spiritually intense and soft-spoken Dakotah. And

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the traders' insidious influence comes to a climax in the final tragic scenes, when they bring chaos to the Mahto by introducing them to firearms and liquor. Still, the whiteman is not solely responsible for the growing internal disputes among the Mahto, nor are the Indians simply noble savages. The band has its own share of power-hungry individuals, its own petty disputes and rivalries, and a deeply ingrained warrior ethic that condones theft and bloodshed as a means of gaining predominance over other tribes. Hill is not reluctant to confront these issues or to deal realistically with their moral consequences.

Perhaps inevitably, Hill couldn't resist occasional touches of didacticism. The author's moral voice becomes more insistent near the end and can be clearly heard in Ahbleza's and Tonweya's last encounter, a scene laden with portentous parting words. The story could have stood alone on its narrative and dramatic strengths, and Hill should have trusted her readers to discover the book's message and to form their own judgments without her solemn intervention.

But the overall effect is so moving, and the picture of this people so authentic and so carefully rendered, that this objection is a small one. *Hanta yo* means clear the way in Dakotah; Ruth Beebe Hill certainly succeeded in disarming my skepticism and clearing the way for an understanding of what the Dakotah described as *taku śkanśkan*—spiritual vitality, something in movement.

Dorothy Wickenden

Language and Responsibility by Noam Chomsky translated from the French by John Viertel

(Pantheon; $10, $3.95 paperback)

Language and Responsibility is a long interview with Chomsky, conducted by the French linguist Mitsou Ronat, which was originally published in French translation and which has now, in a bit of linguistic monkey business, been rendered back into English by Chomsky's colleague John Viertel. An interview is a poor device for surveying the established lines of science and philosophy with any degree of comprehensiveness, but it is fine for talking about hunches and random speculations. Chomsky talks here about his hunch that universal grammar would provide the basis for a theory of human nature. He wonders whether the brain might not contain mental "organs" similar to the organs of the body, and he speculates that knowledge of such "organs" might help us explain why some areas of intellectual inquiry, such as mathematics, have progressed extravagantly over the centuries, whereas other areas, such as literary criticism, have failed to advance an inch in 2000 years. He recounts a crucial breakthrough in his own thinking which occurred while seasick in the midst of the Atlantic in 1953, and between other thoughts he bashes away at his critics—empiricists to the right of him, sociolinguists to the left—with all the syllogistic gusto at his command.

He also touches briefly on the sources and nature of his political ideas. These comments are worth noting because although Chomsky generally manages to get his topical views aired—his charge of American complacence in the face of genocide in East Timor is the most recent of his public pronouncements—his larger political philosophy seems doomed to obscurity and misrepresentation. And this not because his ideas are difficult or unclear but because they are unusual, and hence subject to misunderstanding. His hardest problem is to explain that he is not, after all, particularly sympathetic to communism. It is always being suggested that he is; a *New York Times* editorial hinted in this direction at one point during the fall. Nor is this suspicion about him exclusively the property of those to his right. Several battalions of the radical left prefer waving Chomsky as a banner to reading him, and tend to celebrate him as a man of safely orthodox convictions. The truth, as book after book has shown, is somewhat different. The interview demonstrates that Chomsky's drummer is so foreign to the orthodoxies of the left that Marxism, aside from a few syndicalist heresies, leaves him cold; Ronat discovers that not even French Marxism, God forbid, can get the man marching in step.

There is no question, though, that Chomsky is moved by profoundly radical impulses. His radicalism has the effect of pushing his objections to various aspects of American policy into a condemnation of American policy as a whole, and of extending that condemnation all the way into a criticism of the bases of liberal thought. But the striking thing about the main argument he makes—that liberalism is a "mode of distortion" serving the broad class interests of the intelligentsia and that its hidden biases tilt dangerously to the state—is that this same argument can just as easily be thrown up against communism and bureaucratic forms of social democracy. Indeed, as Chomsky has observed elsewhere, his case against liberalism bears more than a little resemblance to Bakunin's case against Marxism, contained in those famous passages where Bakunin prophesied

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that Marxism would become the ideology of a "new class" of technocrats and intellectuals in control of the state. Radical criticism along *these* lines is not exactly a variant of fellow traveling. Chomsky mentions in the interview that the communist world takes such a dim view of this avenue of analysis that his denunciations of American policy have not even been translated there—a remarkable and telling fact, considering that no one has blasted American policy with more vehemence or with more footnotes than he.

It must be said that the new book is unlikely to lead readers who have not discovered political insights in Chomsky before to discover them now. Printed interviews have an unfortunate tendency to make the interviewee's voice sound shrill whenever something sweeping or emphatic is said (here, whenever Chomsky mentions *The New Republic*, his least favorite journal), and in any event are too offhand for preaching to the heathen. Readers seeking an idea of Chomsky's political precepts would still do best to look up his influential essay of 10 years ago, "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship," just as readers seeking an introduction to Chomskyan linguistics would still do best with his earlier book, *Reflections on Language*.

Paul Berman

Paul Berman has contributed to *TNR, Harper's, The Nation, The Village Voice* and other journals.

Correction

The editors regret that Meyer Schapiro's name was misspelled in our review of his *Modern Art* (*TNR*, February 3).

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Paris Diarist

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Whenever my wife and I visit Paris we spend a good deal of time with friends, most of them intellectuals and artists on the left. That is no longer the case. No, we have not changed our friends; they've changed their politics. It's hard to tell exactly why. What is clear, though, is that, unlike America's new or neo-conservatives, their hearts have not turned to stone or their blood to ice water. In fact they seem rather more compassionate now—or it may simply be that their compassion is not circumscribed by doctrine but enhanced by experience. If there was any one decisive trauma for the *gauchiste* intelligentsia it is what has been happening these last years in Vietnam and Cambodia, society as prison or as death-happening. They feel themselves responsible. The French were the first and most intense Indochina doves, pressing the amply justified guilt they felt for their colonial adventures on to the Americans who quickly did more than enough to merit the burdens of shame. But French leftists, like some Americans in the streets and faculty clubs of our country, were not simply anti-war; they were pro-North Vietnamese, pro-Viet Cong, pro-Khmer Rouge, and it was these particular heroes who turned out the victors. What have they done with their victories? "History is a butcher block," Hegel said. And so it is again. "We who claimed to lay the foundations of kindness," Brecht wrote a century later, "could not ourselves be kind." An understatement when applied to communist hegemony in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The eminent French journalist of the left, Jean Lacouture—biographer of Nasser, Ho Chi Minh, Malraux, deGaulle and Leon Blum (the last of these lives to be published in English next year by New Republic Books) has been putting himself through public agony over his own role in persuading westerners to welcome communist rule in Indochina. The discussion has been joined by others in *Le Monde* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Along with Bernard Fall, Lacouture early in the conflict had written several quite influential articles in *TNR* insisting on the justice, at least the relative justice, of the communist cause. Fall is dead; what he would believe today is impossible to say. Lacouture, a man of scruple and conscience, will not absolve himself on the easy out that the US also committed terrible enormities in Vietnam. Ideas have consequences. Right now the consequences are borne by those millions who live under the boot of Asian Stalinism.

No American anti-war figure was embraced by the French with as much ardor as Noam Chomsky. His professional skills at logical argument, at once so relentless and self-contained, appealed to the French penchant for abstraction. Not since the 19th century has empirical evidence weighed very heavily with Paris intellectuals. Whatever implausible accusation Chomsky hurled at the US could not tarnish his reputation. So what cachet he long ago lost with American audiences he still retained on the Boulevard St. Germain and Montparnasse. His name was still invoked in hushes over expresso at Deux Magots. Chomsky arcana continue to sell briskly in the book stores near the Sorbonne. That's now also becoming past tense. His strenuously confident defenses of Pol Pot's fratricidal gang in Cambodia were too much even for the French sects which ordinarily see little disjunction between cruelty and virtue.

One of Chomsky's great friends in Paris was Maria Jolas whom I'd counted as a friend too until, some three years ago, she told me she'd no longer see me because Chomsky had told her I was "an enemy of the people." It was a strange phrase coming out of her lips. An imaginative, intelligent and independent woman already in her mid-80s, she is the *doyenne* of the American expatriate community on the left bank. She'd been there since 1919. She founded, along with her husband, Eugene, one of the vanguard literary magazines of the 1920s, *Transition*, and did editing for Joyce and Beckett, translating for Natalie Sarraute. Jolas is vigorous, funny, lively, intrepid. I'd persuaded her to start an autobiography, the first 50 pages of which she read to Anne and me between sips of brandy one night in her warm and modest apartment on the rue de Rennes. I was hurt by her cutting me; I still am. But I get some *Schadenfreude* from the fact that she's at last lashed out at Chomsky, not because of some vague political whisperings against him, but because he'd become a tribune for a regime whose routine was murder.

Almost every Frenchman over 50 you meet tells you about his courage in the Resistance. The myth of popular resistance is meant to overshadow the reality of routine collaboration. New scholarship is discovering how deep that collaboration ran, not only among the French right and center, but the left as well. This was particularly the case with Communists during the years of the Stalin-Hitler pact, but it went on till just before the end of the war. My friend David Pryce-Jones, who so upset the British aristocracy with his book on Unity Mitford and her circle's infatuation for Hitler, is about to do the same in France with his study of collaborationist Frenchmen across social classes and political loyalties. His most explosive material is about those who, having worshipped Moscow, found it easy to slouch toward Berlin. The official left seems nearly hysterical about the impending scrutiny of its past. The official right has gone on the offensive. A new book by an ex-leftist turned far rightist explains away and condones the fascism of Drieu de la Rochelle. Another recent volume is an apologia for the grotesque anti-Semitism of the novelist Louis Ferdinand Céline. No guilt here.

One industry for which the clientele has declined is *haute couture*. Apparently there are no more than 2000 women the world over, possibly as few as 1500, who buy anything from the many thousands of available individualized designs, each priced at many thousands of dollars. But the industry is big nonetheless, maybe bigger every year. Aside from the superrich, it draws fashion writers and photographers to Paris, but its genuine importance is as a hype for couturier-named perfumes and scents, plus the popular *prêt-à-porter* lines. We went to the Cardin show where high coned or wide military shoulders, skirts that impede walking, and miners' head lamps as hats seemed to be the distinctive marks of the season. Not just at Cardin; it was pretty much the same everywhere else. The Cardin fest, like the others, was an invitation-only show (how we got an invitation is another story), and numbered invitations guaranteed seats; unnumbered ones, nothing. One aging smart dresser complains that she'd always gotten a numbered invitation. "Why not this year?" "Tiens," said the doorman, by which he seemed to mean she'd had her chance just like the blousey look and long hems. In the crush to get in another elderly woman with an unnumbered invitation said she was about to faint. "You will not faint on a seat," she was firmly told. "You will faint right here." No guilt here, either.

M.P.

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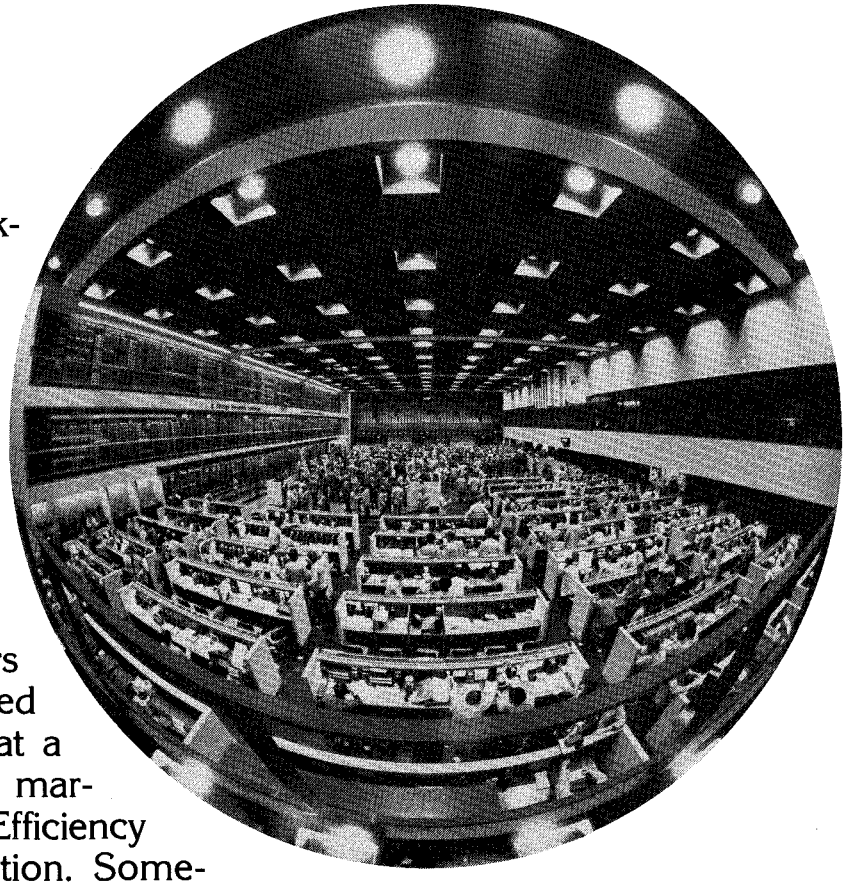

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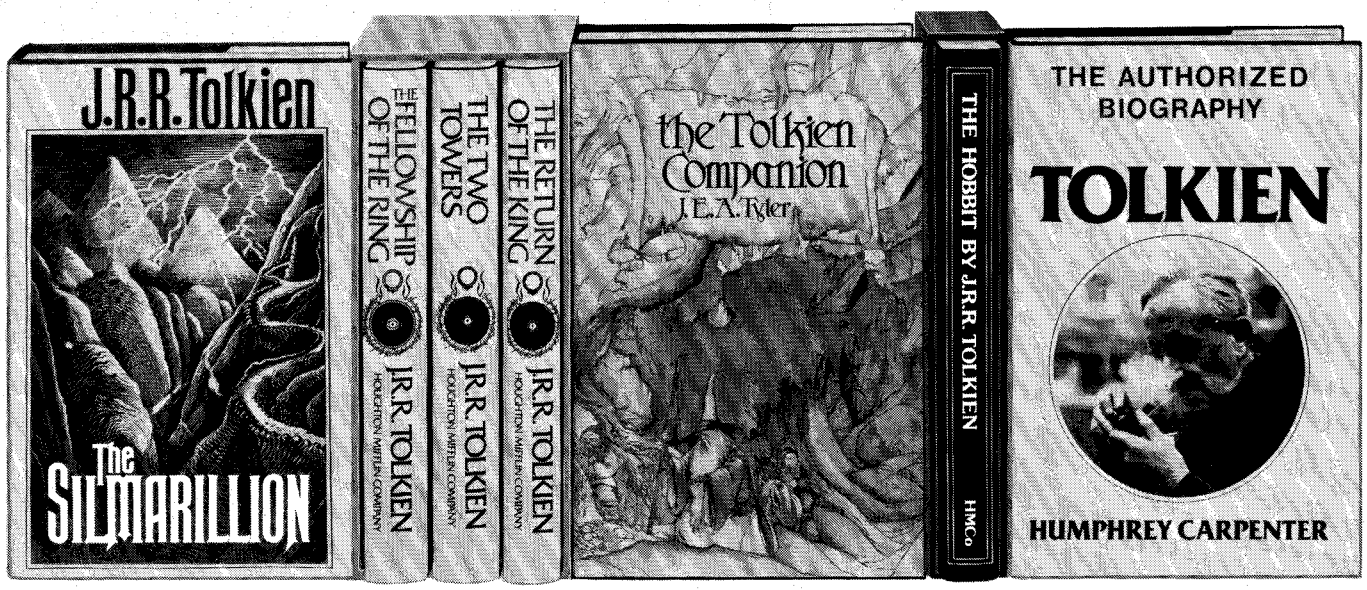

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